

# **The Doctrine of Eternal Security**

By: Bruce Moylan

## **Preface**

Until now, I have put off writing a paper on eternal security (ES) because those that believe it and those that don't have so many doctrines in dispute that starting at the tail instead of the head seemed counterproductive. Additional doctrines that these two camps hold differing views on are the Atonement, the functionality of the Law on believers, the nature of freewill, election, justification, the nature of man, original sin, predestination, and several other areas almost too numerous to list. Basically, while these two camps focus on this important visible and vocal issue, like an iceberg, there is a lot going on under the surface.

It has therefore been my practice to teach the more foundational doctrines and people will naturally come to the same conclusion on this higher-level topic. One of the main problems that I have witness in regards to this topic is that many people only know one side of the debate. People know what they believe, but few have studied the paradigm of the opposing view with its associated presuppositions. I have attempted to look at both sides of this issue and present both cases as best as I can. This doesn't mean that I don't take a side in the issue, but that I do not try to ramrod my opinions and masquerade them as facts.

## **Introduction**

The teaching of ES is a foundational doctrine to many Christian denominations. Many great men of God have been on opposite sides of this debate and it probably will not end by reading this paper. However it is hoped that after reading this article, one will be better informed about both positions and will be able to make a more informed decision on what they believe.

This doctrine of ES also goes under two other names, "Perseverance of the Saints", and "Once Saved Always Saved". More than likely the reader has heard at least one of these terms if they have been in church even for a short amount of time. This doctrine can be traced back in Church history to the time of Augustine, but it has become more widely accepted since the times of the Protestant Reformation brought forth by the teachings of John Calvin.

It should be no surprise therefore that this doctrine is a foundational belief of the Calvinistic school of theology. Perseverance of the Saints is the "P" in the famous Calvinistic acronym TULIP. Acceptance of the first four points of Calvinistic thought brings one to an inescapable conclusion that ES is true. I see no way around this. If the first four points of Calvinism are true, then ES is a slam-dunk. However, this paper is not

written with a Calvinist in mind, but an Arminianist who believes in ES. To properly address this issue with a Calvinist would require that one start at the beginning and not at the end of his presuppositions. Typically, if an Arminianist accepts but a single one of Calvin's doctrines as true, ES would certainly be the one. The next most common Arminianist position would be the combination of total depravity "T", and perseverance "P". I have always found it fascinating that many people with a strong Arminianist bent will believe the first and last doctrine of Calvinism while strongly rejecting the middle. As Calvinism is a rigorously logical system of thought, one doctrine leads to and depends on the other. Like building blocks, the one above is dependant on the one beneath. How someone can reject the entire core of Calvinism but somehow end up in the same theological belief has always been intriguing to me.

### **What Does this Doctrine Mean?**

The meaning of the doctrine of ES means that once a person has been "saved", they are forever in God's hands. Nothing can separate them from God. Whatever the believer does post-salvation has no effect on his eternal destiny although it could have an impact on this heavenly treasure and earthly pleasure. The obvious competing concept is that while it may be difficult to do, a believer can act in such a way as to "lose" his salvation.

In all candor however, this is a strawman argument that those who accept ES foist on non-ES believers. As the wisdom of debating goes, the one who sets the definitions wins. This is the same as "pro-life" or "anti-women's rights". These two terms address the same group of people, but one sounds positive while the other sounds harsh and very negative. So if non-ES supporters do not believe that you can "lose" your salvation, what do they believe?

Non-ES adherents would more than likely say that you can forfeit or renounce your citizenship in heaven, or you can choose to end your relationship with God as freely as you chose to initiate it. We had freewill in entering into this covenant relationship, and we can use that same freewill to choose to walk away from it. These words better describe the converse view of ES as opposed to "losing" something.

In our language, when someone loses something it is usually assumed that he didn't want to lose it or the intent on his part was to keep it. One could reflect on the parables of the lost coin or the lost sheep as examples. In both these cases the thing lost was of great value and the one who lost it began a search to retrieve the item. No one who denies ES even remotely ascribes to this type of mechanism for "losing your salvation". One who "loses their salvation" must hold it as worth nothing, and will not search for it. They have decided to reject God's plan for themselves and again desire to take control of their own lives. Such a person would bring disgrace upon Jesus and his atonement.

Again, the problem here is definitional. Non-ES proponents believe that we are not saved from Hell, but we are saved from sinning.

Romans 6:2b

*We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?*

Romans 6:6-7

*For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin- because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.*

Romans 6:11-14

*In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.*

The end of this verse simply states that if we are saved and under grace, sin will not be our master. If we sin, then sin is our master and by logical deduction we are no longer saved from it.

John 8:34

*Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.*

Here from the mouth of our Lord we hear that "everyone" who sins is a slave to sin. Can we take this to only mean everyone who isn't saved? Well that approach would make this verse meaningless. To say that sinners are slaves to sin is hardly news; however, to say that "everyone" also includes the saints is a real attention grabber.

Therefore, the non-ES person believes that the Good News is not that we are no longer going to Hell, but that we have been freed from the bondage of sin. The fact that we will not go to Hell is a consequence of not continuing to sin coupled with the forgiveness of our past sins. When an ES person says that they are "saved" and then confess that they continue to sin, this confession sounds like a foreign language to a non-ES believer. It appears to be odd to claim that we are sinning while at the same time being saved from sin. Of course you are no longer saved from sin if you sin. Doesn't this only make sense? I hope the reader can now start to understand that when ES and non-ES people discuss this topic, that we are worlds apart in what they believe. Far from just having this one doctrine as a difference, they don't even have the same language.

Permit me now to give those unfamiliar with the non-ES view an overview that may help in fostering a better understanding of the opposite view. First, the non-ES believer considers the question of "If a believer sins, do they lose their salvation?" as the wrong question to ask. As addressed earlier, to claim to be free from sinning while sinning appears to be illogical tail chasing. What the non-ES position believes is the correct question is, "Does a child of God remain a child of God after they sin?"

The non-ES view believes that you can freely choose to walk away from God, but that your relationship with God will not disappear in an instant. If you have an established Godly character, that character will enable God greater access into your soul so that his influence is felt quite strongly indeed. The Spirit will lead you along the paths of repentance. Those who have not enjoyed a relationship with God in the past will not be disciplined as children.

I Corinthians 15:33-34

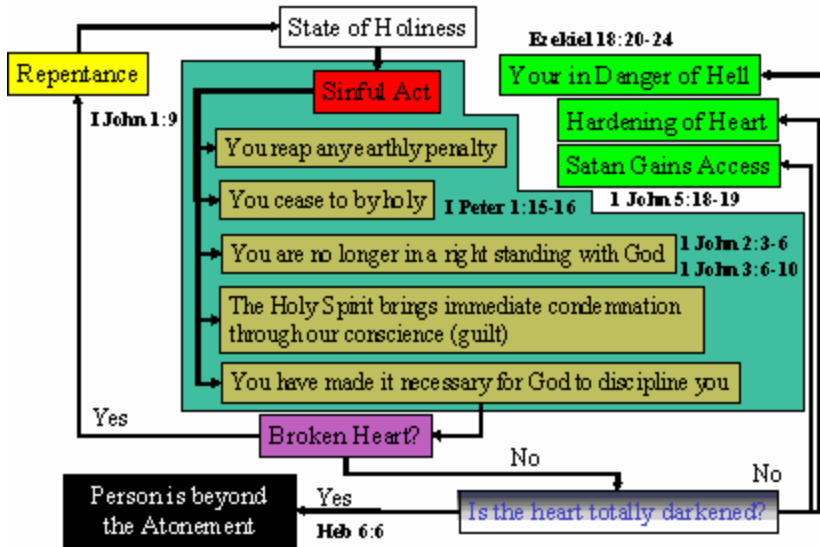
*Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God-I say this to your shame.*

Here we see that if a Christian is not careful in the company they keep, their once good character will be corrupted. Paul is warning such people to come back to their right reason and realize that they cannot continue to sin without dire consequences. Paul here is trying to break through to such people to say that a Christian who sins is shameful and is in danger.

On the other hand, God is not an iron-fisted tyrant who will refuse to let you go if you so desire. Just like the prodigal son when he asked his father for his inheritance, his father gave it to him and watched him walk away. Each day he hoped that his son would return, but there were no guarantees.

The largest mischaracterization of the non-ES view is when people claim that this view holds that one sin and you lose your salvation. This then sets up a ridiculous strawman whereby you are saved, lose it, are saved again ad infinitum. This is not the case. Clearly God disciplines his children. Unless God disciplines for no reason, then those who have qualified for such treatment must have sinned somehow. So it is clear that one will not lose their relationship with God based on a single sin.

# What Happens If a Christian Sins



I have borrowed the diagram to the right from my presentation on the Atonement to better illustrate what this view believes. First we start with a Christian in a state of holiness. When this person sins they drop down into the next block and they are now open to a myriad of consequences.

After a period of time while these consequences work on the person the question is, do they have a broken heart or do they resist the cry of the Holy Spirit to repent? If they repent, God forgives and they are restored back to a state of holiness. If they do not, their heart is hardened and the Holy Spirit will continue to discipline them hoping that they will be broken and repent. However, the time whereby this person is actively suppressing the call of the Holy Spirit to repent is not a safe time. Satan starts to be given a foothold that increases with the hardness of the heart. The Christian will continue in this loop through this process until they either repent or their hearts become totally darkened. Once their hearts have reached a point of total darkness they have fulfilled Hebrews 6 and 10 and have now stepped beyond the atonement. This is what is non-ES proponents believe is the unpardonable sin.

While only God knows the condition of the heart, remaining in the area whereby we resist the entreaties of the Holy Spirit is not a healthy place to be or one that honors God. All Christians upon the first inkling of grieving the Spirit of God should immediately repent. This is the only good and true response for the believer. This doesn't mean that the Christian never sins, but it should be quite rare, and maintaining a non-repentful state for any length of time must be avoided. Rebellions should last seconds not days, months, or years. As you mature in the faith, you will find the length of time between rebellions to be lengthening considerably. Mature Christians will be marked by holiness expressing itself through obedience to the every whisper of God. People should be shocked when a mature Christian sins, not complacent.

So now we can get back to the question at hand, "Can a child of God sin and remain a child of God?" The answer is yes, but there are limits. No you don't "lose" your standing with God after one sin, but as the sins multiply and pile up, your chances increase. This is not a game that any true Christian should want to play. Russian roulette comes to mind. No sane person would do such a thing. However, make no mistake, there are consequences to sin. A child of God will not be righteous while in a sinful unrepentant state. Yes, God has much greater access to the heart of a rebellions child of God as compared to a hardened sinner, but with each rejection of the Holy Spirit, this child is being converted slowly back into a hardened sinner.

This is what is meant in II Peter 2:20-22

*If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them. Of them the proverbs are true: "A dog returns to its vomit," and, "A sow that is washed goes back to her wallowing in the mud."*

This passage says something that few ever think about. Here it says that it is better to have never left the world than to have escaped and then become entrapped again. All sinners will be better off in the end than one who becomes a saint only to again become a sinner.

This brings us to the requirement of all believers once they have sinned.

I John 1:9

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

Notice here that this is a conditional phrase. "If we confess" then God forgives. What would happen if a "Christian" refused to confess their sin? Would God forgive anyway? If so, then this passage is meaningless. Therefore, is someone sins and refuses to confess it to God then they will die in sin. Clearly this cannot be good.

Now for one final clarification of this view, I will provide a case study. I will not say that all non-ES people would agree with this, but it is my view until someone can show me to be in error.

### Case Study

This case study will serve as an example so that the reader may better understand how I believe. I do not claim that his is anything more than my own understanding of the construct of Moral Government Theology.

There once was a man who dedicated his life to Christ. He was a blameless man in all that he did and he pleased God greatly. In all, he walked with God over 20

years without a single infraction of God's laws until the day of his precious wife's death. After the burial, the man went with some friends back to his house to mourn. As the evening went on, more and more people left until finally there was only one person left. She was a woman who had been a dear friend to the family over many years. As the hours went on she talked with him and consoled him. Her words helped greatly to alleviate his grief. Before either of them knew it they started to kiss and things got out of hand. Without any real intention on either of their parts they found themselves in a compromising position. While in this position, the man has a heart attack and drops dead on the spot. The question is, will he go to heaven?

My "conjecture" on this is probably. God is not looking for a reason to keep us out of heaven; he is looking for one to get us in! Now this opens up a lot of questions that I am not prepared to address here, however; to claim that God will overlook a person's demonstrated character and send them to eternal torment for a moment of weakness offends my heart and sense of justice. (A friend of mine has written a wonderful paper on this point, but it is entirely too long to include here.) The Holy Spirit did not have sufficient time to convict the individual of his wrong doing, and given a clear mind, his character would have you believe that he would have repented immediately and unconditionally. While it is not an ironclad seminary theological treatise on the topic, I hope that most people would agree that surely God must have some recourse. This however is not to say that God simply overlooks this sin. No, one sin is sufficient to send us to Hell, but what I am saying is that being a "friend of the court" for 20 years may enable God to governmentally give us hope.

Now let's look at a slightly modified case. Say this same man decided that he didn't die after this initial liaison, and he really enjoyed it. Now, instead of repenting and following this "he gives and takes away" kind of God, he decides that he is going to live life his own way. He then spends the next twenty years in a drunken stupor moving from one hedonistic encounter to another. After such a life, his liver fails and he dies. Will he now still go to heaven?

My view is absolutely not. He has impugned God's character and held his government in contempt. He has resisted every entreaty of the Holy Spirit to repent and come back to God's love. Letting someone like this into God's Kingdom would be an affront to every being in heaven especially God himself.

Hopefully the reader can better understand my current views on a very difficult case study. This study goes to the very heart of God. In my opinion, if we don't show God's true heart here, we can forever alienate many from ever considering following our Lord. People will not follow an ogre. In closing, I do realize that my views are askew of a strictest interpretation of Moral Law, but one I feel comfortable in defending.

## **Calvinistic Origins**

As stated previously, the doctrine of ES flows logically out of the teachings of Calvin. Since Calvinism states that the believer has no freedom to accept God, it logically follows that he/she has no freedom to reject God. This comes from the doctrine of irresistible grace or, the "I" in TULIP. While it is quite easy to see why a Calvinist who denies any role of man in salvation could teach ES, it isn't quite so obvious why an Arminianist who rejects irresistible grace would also adhere to this doctrine that originates from Augustinian/Calvinistic thought. Many however rely on the Calvinistic proof texts for this doctrine as foundation enough. Calvinism however has the additional advantage of showing this doctrine to be logically derived, harmonious with previous other doctrines (all of which Arminianists universally deny) and with the proof texts examined below. (I do not make the statement that the Scriptures below are the only passages used by the adherents to ES, but they are among the most popular.)

Because the "P" is the last in a series of doctrines all leading up to ES, several papers addressing all previous doctrines of TULIP would be required to even start to make sense to a five point Calvinist. Therefore, if you are a full blown 5-pointer, then you can stop reading here and save yourself a lot of time. If you don't know if you are a 5-pointer or haven't every heard of Calvinism or Arminianism then please continue.

The thing however that must be remembered is that ES is a derived doctrine with proof texts, and not a doctrine that was derived independently of the other doctrines. Inside the confines of TULIP, the "P" is like a quarterback protected by his offensive line. Very big individuals make it their job to protect the quarterback. Take away the offensive line and the quarterback has better be nimble because he is out in the open. This is the case when an Arminianist goes to defend ES. No longer can "irresistible grace" and "unmerited election" be counted on as blockers. In this game, ES has a much steeper hill to climb. Yes the Calvinistic proof texts are still there, but without the sledgehammer weight of "TULI" in front to protect it; it is a much softer target.

This will be seen more in the ES Harmonization section. John Calvin himself didn't even try to defend ES against the many verses seemingly opposed to it. He thought it best to develop another strategy. In fact, most ES adherents do not mount a frontal assault on these contrary verses, but they seek to disarm them using other means. The only method that tries to completely ignore these passages is the often heard "well then they really weren't saved in the first place." Here no attempt is ever made for harmonization and they appear to be almost if not totally ignorant of literally dozens of passages that stand in stark contrast to their stated position. This is quite an amazing approach that even John Calvin refused to take. I would surmise that this was because it violates nearly every rule of proper Biblical interpretation. While I disagree with everything John Calvin ever believed, he was certainly a scholar of substantial merit, and he knew that ignoring verses is simply not acceptable regardless of your doctrinal bent.

The verses below are supplied to demonstrate that the doctrine of ES does have Biblical support. However this doesn't end the question. A first level hermeneutic is that all Scripture must harmonize. If the non-ES view is to take the field, then it must logically be able to show an alternate explanation for all ES proof texts and vice versa. If there

were no verses with a contrary position, then these verses (as well as other similar ones) would be sufficient to prove a point. However, as it shall be demonstrated later, there are many verses stating the direct opposite of ES. Both sets of Scriptures must be harmonized both ways before any coherent theology can be put forth.

Additionally, while these texts may seem to form quite a firm foundation for this doctrine, one must always remember that the proof of a doctrine lies with the one making the positive assertion. To disprove this doctrine, one must only come up with one definitive contrary point and the "cannot" is proved false. This wouldn't mean that it might not be rare, but only that one cannot say that it is absolutely impossible. However as the reader will find out, making this "definitive" point is subjective. There has been several attempts made to harmonize all of these contrary verses, and the reader must decide if any or all of them are logical, reasonable, and are also Biblically supportable.

As with all theological positions, no "proof" is ironclad. Jesus couldn't even convince all of the Jews that he was the Son of Man and he raised the dead! Likewise, while it is obvious to the casual observer that one side of this debate must be wrong, determining which one is correct is not a trivial case. I will attempt to give the reader various points to think about, and you must let the Holy Spirit guide you.

One last point to realize however; is that the Bible does not categorically state that you cannot terminate your relationship with the Lord. This is an inferred position. This is why the paper cannot end here. One must test how clearly this inference can be made.

With this said, lets look at the most common proof texts for ES.

## **Proof Texts for ES and Non-ES Harmonization**

When you need to get the best material on ES, there aren't too many places better than the Southern Baptist Statement of Faith. Here under the heading of "God's Purpose of Grace" is a wonderful example of how a Calvinist views salvation. This paper however is addressed to Arminianists who also believe this view. It is therefore understandable that many of these texts require one to wear Calvin glasses.

To be honest, of all of the verses listed in the ES section I had difficulty in seeing where many even addressed the issue at hand. To be fair however, I will list all of these references at the end of this section so that the reader can try and discern how the verse is a proof text for ES.

John 3:16

*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.*

Philippians 1:6

*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.*

These two passages are close in meaning and can therefore be viewed together. If we "lose" our salvation, it will have nothing to do with God. He is faithful and he will provide us with everything needed to accomplish what he has asked us to do. If we reject Him, he has still been faithful and is more than willing to do his part. The famous passage of John 3:16 brings with it a notion that "believes" is not just a point sometime in the past (not whoever believed, but whoever believes - present tense). Therefore our belief must be current. Our belief in the Lord must have begun sometime in the past and continued to the present time. Therefore, anyone who believes throughout this race of life is assured salvation. If you cease to believe, non-ES advocates would say you are no longer assured of anything.

John 5:24

*"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.*

The key phrase here is "and will not be condemned". While this could form a secondary proof text for ES, it is hard to understand why it was listed as a primary text. Here this verse simply states that once a person is saved, he not only crosses over to life, but he will also not be condemned for the sins committed previously. The weak point of this verse to support ES is that it assumes that since you have crossed over, that you cannot cross back. This is tantamount to circular reasoning. Basically, this view assumes that the very point we are trying to prove is already true. You cannot assume that your proposition is true and then use this assumption to prove it. Non-ES proponents view this verse as clearly outlining what happens when we are saved.

Next, what would happen if a person ceased to believe in "him who sent me"? Wouldn't this passage mean that if this occurred that you would no longer have eternal life? Isn't this what we are trying to prove? I ask the reader, if they are saved, can they still choose to believe whatever they wish? Can they not choose to walk away from God as simply as they walked toward him? This verse can only support ES if ES is true and therefore this passage cannot be a proof text.

John 6:44

*"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.*

This ES proof text is charged with Calvinistic overtones. A Calvinist will use this verse to show that God doesn't want everyone saved, or he would draw everyone. An Arminianist would claim that God draws everyone, but we have to make the freewill choice to come. The main point of this verse is that it would be a mistake to think that we first sought God. No, unless God first comes to us, we will never seek Him. Therefore everyone is in basic agreement on the first part of

this verse however the mechanics of it would be disputed. So now we see that Jesus utters an unqualified pledge to "raise him up". Or is it unqualified?

In verse 47 we have:

*I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life.*

Notice that it doesn't say he who "believed", but he who "believes" has everlasting life. What happens if you chose to no longer believe? Then you would have no present experience and therefore this passage would say that you no longer have eternal life. So are we to believe that God will raise up a person in verse 44 who violated verse 47? Is there an implied condition here?

Just because there are no conditions attached to verse 44 doesn't mean that there aren't conditions. Remember, the Bible is like a giant jigsaw puzzle. Each verse is a piece, but no piece can speak out of harmony with those surrounding it. Isn't this how we know where the piece goes, because it harmonizes with those around it?

As an example, we live with unspoken conditional statements all of the time. Say a teenager asks his Father if he can go over his friend's house that coming evening. The Father says sure. Well after issuing this "unconditional" statement the Father finds out that tonight at the friend's house is a wild party with plenty of alcohol and illegal drugs. Is there anyone who would believe that his former statement now binds the Father? Do you think that the son will find himself over at the friend's house that night? Do you think that his son pointing out that the "yes" was stated unconditionally would move the Father to change his mind? Was the father's response really unconditional, or an unspoken conditional? The conditions didn't need to be stated as the son more assuredly knew that if he told his father everything that the answer would have been no. Here we see that both parties knew the "family rules" that extend to all situations without being restated each time. The question is, does God have "family rules"?

Now some may say that this example is not applicable as God would have known about the "party" and simply said "no" in the first place. Well let's see if this is true?

Ezekiel 20:5b-6

*On the day I chose Israel, I swore with uplifted hand to the descendants of the house of Jacob and revealed myself to them in Egypt. With uplifted hand I said to them, "I am the LORD your God." On that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of Egypt into a land I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most beautiful of all lands.*

Please note that there isn't a hint of a condition stated in God's pronouncements. From the ES position this is a done deal, a real slam-dunk. But is this what happened?

Verse 8

*'But they rebelled against me and would not listen to me; they did not get rid of the vile images they had set their eyes on, nor did they forsake the idols of Egypt.*

Verse 13

*'Yet the people of Israel rebelled against me in the desert. They did not follow my decrees but rejected my laws-although the man who obeys them will live by them-and they utterly desecrated my Sabbaths.*

So why is God bringing this up now? What is God going to do because His people violated an unstated condition? Is this fair?

Verse 15-16

*Also with uplifted hand I swore to them in the desert that I would not bring them into the land I had given them-a land flowing with milk and honey, most beautiful of all lands- because they rejected my laws and did not follow my decrees and desecrated my Sabbaths. For their hearts were devoted to their idols.*

Here we see that at least in the mind of God, verse 5 & 6 had a clearly implied condition of obedience attached even though it is not stated. Are the proponents of ES making the same mistake? Is not obedience implied in this proof text? Will God treat His current covenant children the same way he treated the Israelites, if not, why not?

Please take a moment to study the gravity of what is detailed here in Ezekiel. God swore with an uplifted hand to do something and attached no conditions whatsoever to it. Then we find out that because they "did" something, God not only pulls back the promise, but also pulls it back by swearing another oath and raising his arm once again. Now why wasn't God clearer in verses 5 and 6? The bottom line is that continued obedience to God is the unstated condition in all passages concerning the future benefits of believers. ES proponents make a critical and potentially life-losing stand when they ignore this clear message from life and Scripture. The problem lies in looking at one passage of Scripture in isolation to others. Only when we place all of the pieces of the puzzle together can we truly see what the picture looks like. Here I will list a couple of passages that all saints should consider as unspoken "family rules".

Matthew 5:48

*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

I Peter 1:13-16

*Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."*

**I John 2:3-6**

*We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.*

**I John 3:4-6**

*Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.*

**I John 3:10**

*This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.*

**I John 5:2-4**

*This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world.*

**I John 5:18a**

*We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin*

I would suggest to the reader that these verses are part of God's "family rules". These certainly fit into the example in Scripture that we reviewed in Ezekiel. Here the unspoken condition of God was that the Israelites not sin. Likewise, I would suggest that this is a very good rule to live by to say the least.

**Romans 5:9-10**

*Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!*

To be honest, while this verse is listed by the Southern Baptists as a proof text for ES, I really cannot see it. Yes, we as Christians have been justified by the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and because of this we will certainly be saved from the coming wrath of God that will be poured out on all who are disobedient. Moreover, as God demonstrated love towards us while we were still sinners, how much deeper will his love extend to his obedient children. To me this verse is simply stating that Christians are totally transformed and it is God's will that we not suffer for our previous crimes against him and his government. It is not God's intent to do anything half way. He will not pardon without also bringing us to life.

While I can see that these two verses can be seen to have some ES leanings, they are hardly a primary proof text for the doctrine. Where do these verses state that one cannot choose to walk away from God? At best these passages are weak secondary verses and should not be used to establish a doctrine such as ES. If the reader has any insight to this verse, I would appreciate hearing it.

Romans 8:38-39

*For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, not 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.*

John 10:28-29

*I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.*

These proof texts for ES hinge on one main point, are we included in the "anything" and "no one" referenced in the passages above? The way you come down on this point is pivotal. From the non-ES standpoint, the Romans 8:38-39, and John 10:28-29 passages state that there are three distinct parties involved: God, you, and everyone else. Because you are the object of discussion, you are logically excluded from the parties trying to "snatch" you. Someone trying to snatch themselves is quite an odd thought. What sort of sense does this make? The pro-ES view has only two: God and everyone else. The reader must decide if it is logical to understand that the entity being acted upon (us) was excluded or included in the mind of the writer.

The Romans passage goes down a specific list of things that cannot separate us from God. The individual himself is not mentioned in this list, but it must be inferred or ES cannot use this as a proof text. They claim that the sweeping term, "anything in all creation" contains the believer himself. While the believer is certainly part of creation, I don't think that this is what the author intended. If someone says that they will protect us from everyone, I don't think that they are thinking of protecting us against ourselves. In fact, this is probably the last thing on their minds. If while they stood watch we committed suicide, I would dare say

that we would have completely blindsided our defender. This is what appears to be inferred from the language.

The passage in John can be viewed similarly. There is God, the believer, and something trying to take us. Please read the last line carefully.

*no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand*

In this phrase we see that it is not logical to assume that "them" is included in "no one". The sentence is constructed so that we can clearly see the three parties involved. There are the forces trying to snatch, there is you the intended target, and there is God who is not going to allow this. These verses simply state that no external entity can take us. The supporters of ES place the believer into the category of "no one" therefore come up with the fact that this verse clearly states that we cannot even do it. However is this position tenable?

As another example of this, suppose a little girl comes home from school one day and runs into her mother's arms. The little girl is sobbing and buries her head deep into their mother's side. Then in a loud sobbing voice she says that everyone hates her. Now from this story, would you conclude that it is logical to include the mother into "everyone"? How about her Father, Grandmothers and Grandfathers? I would think that most people would conclude that the most logical thing to believe is that she is only talking about "everyone" of her schoolmates and not everyone in the entire world.

Now from this example we it should be plain to see that we need to be very careful even when absolute terms are used. The context of the situation is vital in developing the proper meaning. When God is telling us that no one can snatch us from His hand, does it not follow that most likely God is not including us? If He is, can we take this to the next level and say that even God cannot do it? Isn't God someone? Shouldn't He be included into "no one"? If the reader thinks that this is absurd, then why is including the individual so obvious?

If he wanted to reference us, "snatch" is a strange term to use. "You cannot leave" would be a much more straightforward and simple phrase to understand. At the very least, it appears that the pro-ES and con-ES camps can both logically harmonize these verses therefore at the very least they can no longer be used as a primary proof text to support the doctrine.

Romans 11:5-6

*So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.*

This passage is used to show that we are not saved by works but by grace. I don't know of too many who would disagree with this statement. The real question here is what actually constitutes trying to be saved by works. Some would go so

far as to say that anything that you do is a work. Others would take a more moderate view. The goal here however is to find out what the Bible says in the matter. For this we need to look no farther than Acts 2:37-38.

*When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

So here we have the people under conviction clearly understanding that they had to "do" something. Peter then told them what they had to "do" in order to appropriate the grace of God. They had to repent and be baptized. Therefore repenting and being baptized cannot be a work or Peter was very misinformed on how one obtains salvation. Clearly this isn't a real possibility. Now let's see what Jesus says.

Matthew 19:16-17

*Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments."*

So now we see that Jesus didn't even consider obeying the commandments a work. Clearly Jesus says that if you want to enter life, obey. Again, as we will not entertain the idea that Jesus might not have understood the right requirements for salvation, obedience to God's commands cannot be considered a Biblical work.

Next we can see what Jesus tells a Pharisee about what it takes to enter the Kingdom of God.

Luke 10:25-28

*On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."*

Here we see that Jesus is saying that to love God and our fellow man is also not a work but is required in order to have eternal life. Now can one just assume that we can do this just one time and don't have to continue? What would happen if you stopped and refused to love God or your fellowman? Do you think that you can stop this because you are saved by grace and these are works? What would happen if you sinned are refused to repent? Would God simply overlook your defiance, as you believe that repenting is a work? The bottom line here is that you better be sure of what God believes are and are not works before you assume yourself right into Hell.

Therefore we see that repenting, obeying God's command, and loving God and one another cannot be considered a work. We must continue to do these in order to have eternal life. Therefore one cannot say that how we live our life is of no consequence. If we are sinning in thought, word and deed everyday, then are we obeying the commandments?

Ephesians 1:13b-14

*Having 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.*

The passage in Ephesians 1 is interesting as it says that the Holy Spirit is "guaranteeing our inheritance". Most people will then say that when God guarantees something that it will come to pass. No further actions need be performed. God does not lie, and he has placed His reputation on the line, therefore; it will certainly come to pass.

However, one must ask, is this the entire story? The word "guaranteeing" is also translated as sealed (NASB and KJ). The word "sealed" brings to mind the practices of long ago when all official governmental correspondence bore the seal of a King. The seal let everyone know that the King authorized the message and that it was binding. This appears to be the meaning here. The seal of God shows that the salvation of the individual is genuine and is declared genuine by the seal affixed to it.

The question however is can this seal be broken? Nowhere in this passage does it state that this seal is unbreakable. This must be assumed from somewhere else. So with this in mind, we need to look at the Greek word used here to get the exact definition of the word (Strong's ref 4972 - εσφραγισμενοι), Thayer's Lexicon states it's meaning as:

A metaphor, respecting God, who by the gift of the Holy Spirit indicates who is His.

Therefore we see that this "sealing" or "guaranteeing" is a metaphor for God indicating who belongs to him. The metaphor is simply the fact that an actual seal isn't really affixed to the believer. Therefore, while the seal denotes a genuine state of the believer at a point in time, it doesn't mean that the seal also requires that this condition cannot change.

There is not strong or even implied eternal permanence to the word "sealed", but instead this phrase is telling us that the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit will demonstrate to each believer that they are indeed in right standing with God. This "sealing" is your indication that you are in fact forgiven and brought into the Kingdom of light. Therefore, when you can attest to the Spirit's presence in your

life, you can be assured that you are not deceived, but that you are indeed a Christian with all that this entails.

Ephesians 2:8-10

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God- not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

No paper on ES could be complete without a reference to this passage. Most ES people will say that if we are not saved by works, then we cannot lose our salvation based on the lack of works. Is we can lose our salvation because we did or didn't do something then it cannot be a gift. We have already discussed what does not constitute a Biblical work in the Romans 11 passage above.

This approach to defend ES has always confused me. God tells us to stop sinning. Yet some believe that to not do something is a work. God is telling us to stop, not to go and do. Not sinning is simply not a work. Therefore this reasoning isn't very solid.

Finally, we all admit that salvation is a gift of God. No one disputes this obvious fact. But does this verse say or even suggest that once you have accepted this gift that you cannot return it? Why can't we return this freely given gift? What passage of Scripture suggests that gifts are non-returnable? Likewise, yes God prepared us to do good works, but cannot we choose not to? This verse is fertile ground for a debate between Calvinism and Arminianism, but as far as ES is concerned, it really doesn't mention that you cannot give back the gift and is therefore not a strong ES proof text. Again, you must believe that ES is true in order for this to be a proof text. This is another example of circular reasoning.

II Timothy 1:12

*That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.*

This verse again goes back to the same viewpoint. We have entrusted God and believe that he is able to deliver us into his Kingdom. However, it does not state that regardless of what we do, that God will guard it. This is an assumption that ES believers read into this passage. Is it not reasonable to believe that if we run the good race that we will receive the prize? Is it not also reasonable to say that if we drop out of the race we will not receive the prize? Why would anyone bestow a prize on someone who quit the race?

Let's look at what Paul states in the next two verses

*What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you-guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.*

Now if ES be true, why in the world would we need to guard what we have just entrusted to God? Why guard something that cannot be stolen or lost? Why is the Holy Spirit helping us guard it if we cannot lose it? The fact that Paul tells Timothy that he needs to do something and in fact needs the Holy Spirit to aid him, should tell most people that this isn't a done deal. There is some element of risk here that the deposit might not survive if we are not careful.

I Peter 1:3-5

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade-kept in heaven for you, 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.*

Here we see that we have an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade. This verse is a possible proof text for ES, however for an Arminianist; the very next line shows this interpretation to be in error. We see that this inheritance is kept in heaven for those who through faith are shielded by God. Well what happens if someone no longer maintains saving faith, are they still shielded? Doesn't this verse say that this never perishing salvation is kept for those who through faith are "shielded" by God? Are you part of the "who" if you are not shielded through faith? From an Arminianist perspective, God doesn't give us our faith, no faith our response to God based on all that we understand and know about him. Faith is a reasonable belief based on all that we know about God.

However, for this to be an ES proof text would require one to subscribe to the Calvinistic view that God gives us our faith and that we don't have a part in it. So can we lose our faith? If so, then we can "lose" our "shield" and therefore you are no longer included in this verse. Let's look at a couple of passages of Scripture.

I Timothy 4:1

*The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.*

Doesn't this verse clearly say that it is possible to abandon the faith? If a person abandoned the faith and follows demons, do you believe that this person would still go to heaven? Does anybody really expect to find demon worshippers in heaven? Notice that his verse says that they abandoned the faith. You cannot abandon what you do not have. You must possess it in order to abandon it. Therefore is this verse not clearly addressing those who are legitimate Christians who choose later to leave God and follow utter foolishness to their final damnation?

I Corinthians 15:2

*By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.*

This is a very powerful conditional passage. "If we hold firmly" we will be saved. Otherwise, we have believed in vain. If our faith is in vain, then it is worth nothing and is not able to save. The clear conditionality of this verse should cause some to think.

II Corinthians 6:1

*As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.*

Here we see Paul telling people not to have received God's grace in vain, or in other words do not take God's gift and make it worthless. If this wasn't possible, which is a requirement if ES is true, then what is Paul trying to communicate to the Corinthian people? Doesn't ES make this verse utter nonsense?

Romans 11:20-21

*Granted. 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.*

Here we see that the Israelites were broken off because of "unbelief". What would you consider a person who's faith was in vain? Isn't "unbelief" the opposite of "faith"? Now Paul tells us that we need to be afraid. Why? Well because as he didn't spare the original branches when they fell into unbelief, he will not spare you either if the same thing happens. This is powerful non-ES verse that will be discussed later.

I Thessalonians 3:5

*For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent Timothy to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless.*

Here we see that Satan is able to tempt us away from the faith. If this happens you are no longer saved and consequently the person who was responsible for bringing you to faith in the first place would have labored in vain. How could Paul labor in vain if the people spoken to here will go to heaven regardless?

I Timothy 1:18-20

*by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.*

Can a broken and wrecked faith save you? How about being handed over to Satan, does this seem like a good sign? So what did these people reject? They have rejected the faith and a good conscience. (A study on the conscience is another wonderful journey.)

II Timothy 2:17-18

*Their teaching will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have wandered away from the truth. They say that the resurrection has already taken place, and they destroy the faith of some.*

Can a destroyed faith save you? Hopefully the reader can see that faith is not a one-time event, nor something that is static. There are many passages that show that faith can be added to, subtracted from, lost and destroyed. Only if we maintain faith until the end will we be saved.

I John 2:19

*They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.*

This is an interesting passage. This verse states that there were people in their midst that weren't really Christians and that eventually they left. A sign that they were not true Christians is the fact that they left. Now one may say that the converse of this verse is that all that real Christians remain and therefore ES is true. However we must live within the context of the passage. Just five verses later we see the Apostle apparently deny ES.

I John 2:24-27

*See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us— even eternal life.*

*I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.*

Now these verses show a clear contingency (if) in our standing with God. First we are to "see" to it that what we have heard remains in us. This denotes and action on our part. Would this "action" denote a work? Next we see that "if" we do this then the Son and Father will remain with us. The obvious converse to this is that if we choose not to remain, then God will not remain either. As we move along farther we see that people are trying to lead the elect astray. Now is this possible or not? Clearly the people who were performing these actions thought that it were possible, and from the warning of John we could infer that the apostle thinks so also. Finally we see that one thing that the Holy Spirit teaches us is that we need to remain in him. Now this is truly a strange lesson for God to teach us if

it isn't possible not to remain. It would also be quite strange if there isn't anything we can do in regards to this situation. What can this verse mean but that we have a part in remaining?

Therefore, while verse 19 could be taken as an ES proof text, the context of the passage weakens this standing significantly. The fact that in verse 18 the context of who these people were left are denoted as "antichrists" would lead one to conclude that verse 19 isn't simply talking about people who just leave. No there is more going on here than meets the eye, but ES is not one of them.

Jude 1:24

*To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy.*

This passage in Jude is again a simple declaration that God is able and quite capable of supplying everything you need in order to do the job that you need to do. We can see this view in II Peter 1:3

*His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.*

Everything that the believer needs in order to comply with God's most reasonable commands is available, but the believer must access it. Notice that it says that everything is available through the knowledge of Him. What will happen if we do not seek to gain this knowledge? Does the promise still stand? Therefore, if one falls from their secure position (II Peter 3:17), they cannot castigate God for holding out on them, or be in some way being responsible for their failure. No, the Bible is quite plain that if we fail to accomplish all that God requires, it is only due to our lack of diligence. Also by looking elsewhere in Jude we find a call to persevere.

Jude 1:20-21

*But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit. Keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to bring you to eternal life.*

Again we see that we are to build ourselves up, pray, and keep ourselves in God's love. What would happen if we neglect such a duty? Would this be God's problem or ours? Why would someone who believes in ES write that we must keep ourselves in God's love. ES teaches that we don't have to do anything in order to remain in God's love. Is there a problem here? The verse in question doesn't have to mean anything more than what was stated here. If you want to read an ES proof text into it, you need to harmonize what the writer meant just a three verses prior.

In conclusion, I hope that I have demonstrated that the non-ES side can harmonize the ES proof texts into a non-ES view. It is usually a matter of different definitions. While there

may be other verses that people see may contain an element of ES, this paper would be a book if I addressed each on individually. However, I hope that the reader can see that many of the strongest passages can be shown in a different light and that other secondary passages have like responses. I would assume that the Southern Baptist Faith and Message wouldn't leave out too many solid proof texts as they listed many that are exceedingly weak. These are listed below. I was unable to see how these verses pertained to ES, but as they were listed in this section I will let the reader decide how strongly they speak to ES.

Now the challenge for the proponents of ES is to harmonize the non-ES verses into their system of thought. Remember, a doctrine is not Biblically accurate unless it can harmonize every verse not simply supply a list of proof texts.

Genesis 12:1-3, Exodus 19:5-8, I Samuel 8:4-7, 19-22, Isaiah 5:1-7, Jeremiah 31:31, Matthew 16:18-19, 21:28-45, 24:22,31, 25:34, Luke 1:68-79, 2:29-32, 19:41-44, 24:44-48, John 1:12-14, 6:65, 15:16, 17:6, 12, 17-18, Acts 20:32, Romans 10:12-15, 11:26-36, I Corinthians 1:1-2, 15:24-28, Ephesians 3:1-11, Colossians 1:12-14, II Thessalonians 2:13-14, II Timothy 2:10,19, Hebrews 11:39-12:2, James 1:12, I Peter 1:13, 2:4-10, I John 1:7-9, 3:2.

## Various Rational Arguments for ES

### 1) **Once you're in God's family you cannot cease to be a son/daughter.**

This approach uses the concept of the family to make the case of ES. As this line of reasoning goes, you may be disappointed in what you son is doing, but no matter what he does, he is still your son. Nothing he can do can change the relationship.

The next step relies on the concept that upon salvation we are "adopted as sons" (Ephesians 1:5) into the Kingdom of God. Galatians 4:4-7 also brings out this very point. This likens me back to my experience of adopting my two wonderful boys. The last thing the judge said before it was final was that there is no law that can reverse the relationship once it is instituted. Praise God for that!

#### The Opposite View

This approach however isn't quite air tight. We are all sons and daughters of God whether we are saved or not. Regardless of our state of obedience or lack thereof, God created every persons spirit and therefore in every sense of the word, God is our father. With this before us, God must sentence countless numbers of rebellious children to eternal separation from Him. To believe that God is only the Father of those who are saved is a misrepresentation of our condition. The above texts are not meant to show that prior to salvation God has no relationship with us. God is the Father of everyone. Think about the parable of the lost son (Luke 15:11). The younger son severed his relationship with the father so he could "do as he pleased". While the son remained a son to the father, the point is that the son was lost to that father. Now not until the son came back of his own will could he again be "found". There is nothing in this parable that would lead us to understand that his son could not leave again. He left voluntarily, he came back voluntarily, and he would presumably stay voluntarily.

His real motivation to staying is the fact that he now knows first hand the difference between the world and his father's house. Since he came back, it is logical to assume that to his mind his father's house was the superior place to be. This line of thought can lead one to believe that once a person comes back to God they are most likely never to again desire the pig sty, but it doesn't mean that it is a complete impossibility, only highly unlikely.

However, we cannot forget the warning of Christ in John 8:34-35.

*Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever.*

In the verse, Jesus cannot be addressing only sinners. To say that sinners are slaves to sin is a statement of the obvious. However, notice that Jesus says "everyone". This is a pretty inclusive statement. Everyone who sins is a slave to sin. "Everyone" would include sinners, and saints alike. Now if you sin, you are a slave

to sin and Jesus says that slaves have no permanent place. So how can one justify a sinning saint being eternally secure?

This is again seen in Romans 6:16

*Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey—whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?*

So whom is Paul talking to in Romans? Was it sinners or saints? Paul says that when "you" obey someone you become their slave. You are either a slave to sin or to righteousness. Paul disputes that one can be a sinning slave to righteousness.

## 2) **It is inconceivable to be "Born Again" again (Luke 15:34)**

This argument comes more from logic than anything. On the surface it does seem rather absurd that we could be caught in some never ending cycle of being "lost and found". This concept reminds me of the movie Groundhog's Day where Bill Murray wakes up every morning only to find himself back in the same day. This is a fanciful concept for certain. This statement however mischaracterizes how the opponents of ES view the world and therefore this is not a killer argument.

### The Opposite View

Those who do not ascribe to the doctrine of ES generally do not hold that you are tossed out of the Kingdom upon committing any infraction. The Bible teaches that we are disciplined as sons (Hebrews 12:7-11) and that we are to purify ourselves (I John 3:3). Now no son needs discipline unless he has done something wrong. Additionally, Christians are in a process of purification that leaves open the idea that we are not like Ivory soap (99 and 44/100ths pure) but we are in a process of obtaining absolute purity. Hebrews 12:11-12 states,

*No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms, and weak knees. Make level paths for your feet..."*

This verse seems to indicate that it is up to us how we respond to God's discipline. We can accept it or reject it. We have a very active role in the development of our godly character. Notice the phrase underlined in the passage. It is not simply all that are disciplined, it is only those who are disciplined "and" have been trained. Doesn't this wording presuppose another category of people who are disciplined and not trained? What happens if we refuse to learn from God's discipline? Will we receive the harvest of righteousness and peace described above? If we retain freewill after salvation, can we still not choose to refuse to strengthen our feeble arms?

As any parent of a rebellious teenager will tell you, if he will not willingly submit to any correction, your only choice would be to remove him. While no one would do this for a single event, many have done it due to repeated and continual acts of rebellion. In fact, if there are other younger siblings in the house, the parent could well be enticing the other children to do the same by allowing "rebellion without consequence". God will not allow anyone to set such an example. Therefore, just as a loving parent would have to tell their rebellious child to leave so that they may set a proper example for their other children, so it would be with God.

### **3) If salvation cannot be earned by good deeds, then it cannot be lost by bad deeds.**

This argument is based on the fact that we are saved by grace. Grace is a gift of God that cannot be merited. Therefore, since we cannot do anything to merit salvation, then why wouldn't it follow that we cannot do anything to lose our salvation? This line of reasoning comes from a logical extrapolation to an accepted Christian premise, or more directly from Calvin's "U" - Unmerited election. The doctrine of unmerited election states that God selected you to be a Christian and you had nothing to do with it. God decides who will be saved, and who will be damned prior to your birth. Your actions or deeds are not even considered in this divine decree as it happens before you even take your first breath. With this doctrine in view, it is easy to see how one could hold to ES. Who could break free of God's grip?

#### The Opposite View

Before we go too far, please remember what we determined were and were not deeds or works. However for this section, let's look at this from a slightly different angle. Sin is a violation of God's Law. When we violate it we become guilty. So let's look at this in the form of a parable. Say Johnny steals a car. Once he has committed the crime, there is nothing he can do to make himself un-guilty. No matter if he lives to 100, he is still guilty of grand theft auto.

Now say Johnny is guilt ridden about this entire affair and decides to turn himself over to the authorities. Johnny goes to his trial and throws himself on the mercy of the court. There is nothing that he can do to assure that he is pardoned, it is solely up to the mercy and discretion of the judge. The judge, sensing his brokenness and sorrow for commission of the crime, decides to give Johnny a pardon.

Now nothing he could have done could have earned him this pardon. He was guilty and justice says that the guilty must be punished. However, due to the wisdom and mercy of the judge, he was released and his crime annulled.

Now with this free gift that Johnny was given which restored him back into the law abiding society, is there anything he can do that will affect this pardon? Say he decides to steal another car. Do you think that this previous pardon will cover his new crime? If not, then how can you say that God's forgiveness of our past sins

requires him to also cover anyone in the future we decide to commit. Can the reader find a single Biblical reference that states that God forgives our future sins?

II Peter 1:9

*But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.*

This brings to mind the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:13).

*You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.*

Here Jesus appears to be saying that once "you" have "lost" your purpose or usefulness, then you are ripe for divine judgment. How can anyone "lose" that which they never had? Can Jesus be referring to sinners? If so, then what did they lose? When have sinners ever been the salt of the earth?

II Corinthians 6:1

*As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain.*

The ability to receive God's grace (salvation) in vain means that it becomes totally useless to you. Clearly God didn't dispense a non-valid pardon from sin, so therefore something had to happen to it post-salvation.

The dictionary definition of vain is:

1. Not yielding the desired outcome; fruitless: *a vain attempt*.
2. Lacking substance or worth: *vain talk*.
3. Excessively proud of one's appearance or accomplishments; conceited.

Obviously the third definition doesn't apply, but Paul is urging the people not to have God's grace not yield the desired outcome and be fruitless and worthless. If God's grace is worthless and does not produce the intended outcome (the salvation of your soul) then it appears that you are no longer saved.

#### **4) Once saved, your name has been written in the Lamb's Book of Life and it will not be removed**

I call this concept the "Case of the Holy Spirit Eraser". It is a near universal belief (I say this because I have never heard anyone dispute it) that once a person repents and makes Jesus Christ the Lord of their life, the Holy Spirit comes into them in a special way. Coincident with this event, your name is then listed in the Lamb's Book of Life. Logic would then dictate that God wouldn't write in a name that He knew later would just be scratched out, so it only makes sense that once you are written in you are in for good.

This seems logical and it places the burden of proof on the non-ES side to show that people are indeed "erased".

### The Opposite View

While it may seem logical that God wouldn't put someone's name in the book that would later be removed, this is only half the truth. God has certain requirements to become a Christian. If a person meets those requirements (repent and believe), then God puts their name in the Book. Why would God not put a person's name in the book that has fulfilled all of the requirements to receive his grace? Now if at sometime in the future this person refused to remain in a submitted lifestyle, then what other choice would God have but to remove his name?

Now that logically both sides have a point, we must go to Scripture to see if this concept has been stated or implied.

Psalms 69:28

*May they be blotted out of the book of life and not be listed with the righteous.*

In this verse we see that David has a notion that God will write someone's name in the book of life, and at some later date, that person could be removed. Where did David get such an idea? Well one place might have been Moses.

Exodus 33:32

*But now, please forgive their sin - but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written. The Lord replied to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book."*

Here God himself states categorically that he will in fact blot out people's names from his book. What would cause God to do such a thing? He will do it to whoever sins against Him. Let the reader meditate on what God has said here. There are people who have been written in His book that he will blot out if they sin against Him. Clearly this must mean that it is possible.

Some have made the case that God has two books, and that God is not referring to the Book of Life here, but some other book. This to me seems like grasping for straws, or like a dishonest bookkeeper with "two" sets of books. However, not only is this concept stated by God and seen by two mighty Old Testament saints, but it was also seen in the writings of John the Apostle in Revelation 3:5.

Revelation 3:5

*He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.*

This passage is a quote from Jesus. Taking the obvious converse of this passage is that non-overcomers could/would be blotted out, and it specifically mentions the Book of Life. Here Jesus broaches the concept of blotting out a name giving a specific warning to the Church of Sardis. This passage neatly fits with the concept salvation being a process. By combining this passage with Exodus 32 can we conclude that a non-overcomer would be someone who sins against God?

### **5) Salvation cannot be a free gift if you have to "do" something.**

This view is invoked whenever you hear someone say "grace alone". Here the point being made is that if anything can affect your standing with the "gift", then our salvation cannot be unconditional. If conditions are attached to the "gift", than it cannot be by "grace alone" and it seemingly violates Ephesians 2:8-9.

#### The Opposite View

The reader should again refer to the Romans 11 critique in the ES proof text section to understand more about what we must "do" to be saved. Next however, no one denies that God freely offers salvation to repentful supplicants. Here the proponents of ES believe that anything that one must "do" post salvation somehow diminishes this extraordinary gift. There is no doubt that what God had to do in order to extend us this pardon demonstrates a love deeper than anyone can fathom, but is a "gift" the best way to think about salvation? Is our biggest problem that we haven't been blessed enough? I think that viewing sin solely from a "gift" prospective is only seeing a portion of the picture.

Another very valuable way of looking at salvation is a pardon. Sin is a crime in the Kingdom of God. Isn't sin simply a violation of God's laws? Isn't God our Judge? Let's look at a couple of Scriptures.

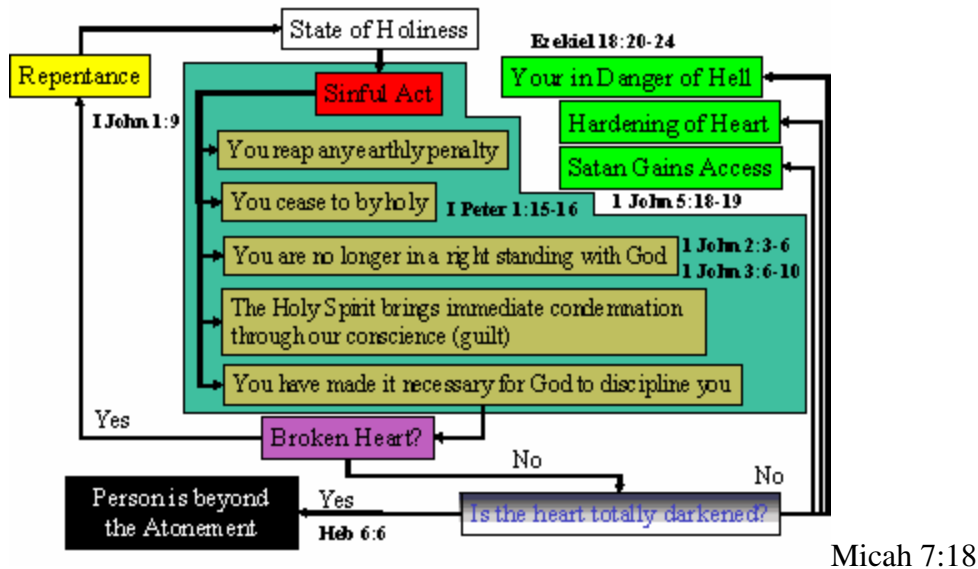
Isaiah 55:7

*Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD , and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.*

Aren't the necessary preconditions to obtaining the pardon that one must turn to the Lord? Isn't the wicked supposed to forsake his ways and evil thoughts? On condition of these events, God will have mercy upon them and he will freely pardon. Does God do it before the sinner does anything? This distinction is also seen in the Ephesians 2:8-9 passage. Calvinists believe that not only is the grace a gift of God, but so is your faith. Basically the sinner brings nothing to the table. God ordains who he wants to save, then gives them the faith to believe and then freely hands salvation. However, all Arminianists believe that Ephesians and Isaiah are saying essentially the same thing. Once you have saving faith, you will forsake these things. God has been working with you to help you develop your faith, but in all of this you still maintain a choice. However, once you step over this line of faith, then God can pardon. You see we are saved "by" grace, but it is

"through" faith. As an example, the water from your kitchen quenches your thirst, but the water gets to you in the kitchen "through" the pipes. Without the necessary precondition of the pipes, you could stand in your kitchen all night long and never relieve your thirst.

## What Happens If a Christian Sins



*Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy.*

Surely an alternate view of salvation is the pardoning of a criminal. So would it somehow diminish the merciful act of extending a pardon to a guilty criminal if the court would require them to cease from further crimes against the Kingdom? Would anyone see this as a gross violation of the pardon? Does this somehow seem unfair? In fact, wouldn't it be seen as shocking if a judge pardoned and then extended an unlimited crime card? Would society stand for such a reckless deed? I don't think that such a Judge could survive the week without being removed.

Please read the parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:21-35) with the view of a pardon in mind. Here we see a King forgive a servant unconditionally. But was the King unreasonable in what he did after he discovered how this unconditionally forgiven servant behaved? Do you have a problem with what the King did? How could he just simply take back his previous pardon and then place upon the servant's head all that he rightly deserved before the pardon? Please take special note of verse 35, "this is how the Father will treat each of you".

So is the non-ES view not in keeping with this parable? What do the proponents of ES say about this parable? I would tell you, but I don't really know.

## 6) Isn't the non-ES view salvation with strings attached?

I believe that the feeling here is that the non-ES view smacks of legalism. The feeling is that we are no longer under the Law with its rules and regulations. By saying that we must do something or "lose" our salvation appears to drag us all back into the Old Testament thereby trying to live in such a way that has already been shown not to work. No, the New Testament is new, and we don't want to be dragged back into that old failed system.

### The Opposite View

This is a basic mischaracterization of the non-ES view. Saying that obedience to God once one has been saved is swerving into legalism is false. What does James say about this?

James 2:20-24

*You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone.*

Here James clearly states that we are not justified by faith alone, but there must also be works associated with any real faith. Now what does this mean? Doesn't Ephesians 2:18 state that salvation is a gift? What sort of gift must one work for?

Well the problem lies in not properly understanding what James is talking about. True faith that leads to salvation will naturally produce works. This is a sign that your faith is indeed genuine. As an example, you cannot have a fire without heat. Now the fire is not doing a "work", it is simply part of what it is. Such is the same for Christians. All Christians will produce work in keeping with their faith. If one does not produce works in keeping with their faith, then their faith is not genuine. As James sums it up in verse 26:

*As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.*

Finally, isn't this what Jesus meant when he said:

Matthew 11:28-30

*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

So why is Jesus saying that he will give us rest by giving us a yoke to carry? You see, trying to be righteous while separate from God is what the Bible considers

works. Once you have been saved however, righteous living and deeds is not works they are simply what you do. Apple trees produce apples, I don't know of anyone who would consider that this is a work of legalism, just an apple tree doing what apple trees do.

I remember a sermon I heard once on this topic referencing Acts 2:37-38

*When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"*

The preacher shouted, "DO? Why you don't have to DO anything!!!"

Well as he pointed out, this isn't what Peter said, no he told them what they had to do in order to be saved.

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."

### **Various Non-ES Proof Texts**

As with the pro-ES verses, this list is not intended to be exhaustive, only to show sufficient textural support. While this list may seem long, there are a good additional number of texts that can be brought up for consideration. However these are more of the primary verses.

Ezekiel 18:24-25

*But if a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits sin and does the same detestable things the wicked man does, will he live? None of the righteous things he has done will be remembered. Because of the unfaithfulness he is guilty of and because of the sins he has committed, he will die.*

Proponents of ES say that the death addressed here is physical death not spiritual. However, when God says that none of your righteous deeds will be remembered, it is hard to imagine how one could gain access to heaven. Wouldn't repenting and accepting the Lord Jesus as your Savior be a righteous deed? Also, we have an amazing double standard at work here. Wicked people can do these deeds without fear of imminent physical harm. However, if a righteous person performs such acts, God will end his life. As an observation, haven't we all seen previously righteous men commit serious sins against God (adultery, murder, lying) and live a long life afterwards? I would submit that finding an example of a Christian being removed by God would be far rarer than Christians committing sins.

Ezekiel 33:11-13

*The righteous man, if he sins, will not be allowed to live because of his former righteousness. If I tell the righteous man that he will surely live, but then he trusts in his righteousness and does evil, none of the righteous things he has done will be remembered he will die for the evil he has done.*

Again we have the same type of wording as found in Chapter 18. Can anyone believe that a "righteous man" is a sinner? No, the only person this term can refer to is someone in a covenant relationship with God. As with the last example, if we chose to believe this verse addresses physical death, we have a problem. Here God tells the person that he will surely live. Isn't he already alive when he is told this? Is God then promising him that he will never die physically? Any interpretation that says the verse means spiritual life, and physical death is in violation of some very basic hermeneutical principles. In the companion verses to this, it is stated that the wicked will surely die. Now is that a revelation? We all are going to die, righteous and wicked alike unless Jesus comes back first. Therefore these verses can only make sense if the death alluded to here is spiritual.

This additional insight leads us to the point of salvation not only being a point in time event, but also a race that must be successfully completed. God tells someone that they are "saved". That "righteous" person trusts God's word and then does what he pleases assured that God would not lie. Does this sound a little like ES? However, this person would receive quite a rude awakening at the Judgment. If ES is true, then one must harmonize how God did not lie to this person. If however the person was "saved" when God told him, and later changed his state before God, God's character is still intact.

Again I bring up Matthew 5:13

*You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.*

Here Jesus is talking to righteous people. He states that they are salt, but that salt can "lose" its effectiveness and become useless. Also, in this state, it cannot ever be made salty again. This salt is worthless and only good for judgment. This brings to mind Hebrews 6.

Hebrews 6:4-6

*It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because, to their "loss" they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.*

The beginning verses seem to unequivocally identify someone who is saved. However, it addresses a case where if this person falls away, it is impossible to bring them back. This is an exact parallel to the salt reference above. The ES doctrine specifically states that this cannot happen, however; but here we see its possibility being addressed. Are these empty words discussing some impossible hypothetical scenario, or is God sending a real and vital warning? This falling

appears to be highlighted by Jesus being held up to public disgrace. These verses form the core of a power verse to the ES opponents. As stated earlier, if one exception can be found, "cannot" is no longer correct. The reader must decide if this is just such an exception. (This will be discussed in more detail later.)

John 15:5-6

*I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me, and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.*

Here, a person "in Jesus" is told that he must "remain". "If" clearly represents a conditional phrase. If he does in fact remain, he will bear much fruit (ref. The Parable of the Sower). If the person does not remain with Jesus, Jesus will not remain in him. How could one be saved without the indwelling presence of Jesus? Those who do not remain are cut off and burned in a fire. This person who was in Jesus is now cast away and burned. Is this a metaphor for being cast into Hell? The reader must decide.

Romans 11:20-22

*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. Consider therefore the kindness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.*

This verse speaks for itself. You stand by faith. If you lose that faith and walk in unbelief, you will be cut off. I am not sure what condition a cut-off saint would be in, but it wouldn't appear to be a good one. Here Paul is stating that God does not play favorites. Israel believed that they were special and that their relationship with God gave them "protection". Paul says that not only were they not "saved" when they fell into unbelief, but that you will not be either. It happened to Israel, and it will happen to you, unless you continue in His kindness.

The next point is why are we being warned? If this is an impossibility for the believer, then I am not sure why God wasted the space in the Bible for useless and meaningless warnings. Finally, if ES is indeed true, why does the Apostle Paul tell us to be afraid, afraid of what?

I Corinthians 15:2

*By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.*

Again we see the conditional "if" used in reference to salvation. If you do not hold on, then your belief is in vain. (See the definition of vain on page 27) I find it hard to believe how Paul could tell anyone any plainer that your salvation is not assured until you finish the race. Salvation is not a point in time event, but an

ongoing process. This is the main presuppositional difference between ES and non-ES believers.

II Corinthians 6:1

*By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.*

Again we see the same words from Paul. We see the "if" word coupled with a vain belief or a belief that is utterly useless.

Galatians 4:8-11

*Formerly, when you did not know God, you were slaves to those who by nature are not gods. But now that you know God-or rather are known by God-how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again? You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.*

This isn't really a primary proof text, but a good secondary one. Paul is addressing those who are Christians and he is warning them that their behavior is threatening their standing with God. Paul is worried that their actions, if not stopped, will nullify their standing with God and therefore make all of his efforts with them to be of no worth.

Philippians 4:12-13

*Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed-not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence-continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*

This passage alludes to the fact that salvation is not a point in time event. Salvation is a process. Paul here tells us that it is important that we continue to work it out with fear and trembling. Why should we be fearful? Why should we tremble? ES tells us that we have nothing to fear. How can we reconcile this to views? I am not saying that it is impossible, only that I am not aware of how to do it.

A point to be made is that Calvinism states that in the second part of this verse that God is providing your will so that you will act according to His purpose. Basically, we're holy robots. However this isn't the only way to take this passage. Here God is providing to the believer everything that is needed so that the believer will freely choose to want to carry out God's good purposes. God illuminates the mind, and the believer must choose to follow the light. There is always a possibility that the believer will refuse God's overtures. Remember God is working in us not on us.

Hebrews 10:26-31

*If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the Law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," and again, "The Lord will judge his people." It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

Here we again see the conditional "if" statement. This passage should also stand as a warning to those who believe that it is normal for a Christian to sin everyday. If they do, according to this passage it better be non-deliberately! Here Paul says that no sacrifice is left. By this he is speaking of the atoning cross of Christ. Once they are beyond the Atonement, there is nothing that can stop their eternal damnation. For anyone who believes that his passage might be addressing sinners, read further on to see that the blood of Christ HAD sanctified him. Therefore, unless God sanctifies sinners, we have a real warning here. This verse says that saints who keep on deliberately sinning are enemies of God and will be thrown into a raging fire. Hopefully everyone can see that if they are still saved, it doesn't save them from much.

Hebrews 10:36-39

*You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a very little while, "He who is coming will come and will not delay. But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be leashed with him." But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved.*

This verse again points out the fact that salvation is not a point in time event. Why do we need to persevere? Again, the verse must be talking about saints, as sinners simply do not do the will of God. Here we see that if a righteous person shrinks back that he will be destroyed. Now the writer of Hebrews believes that better things will befall the audience that he is writing to, but that this warning is certainly real. This is why he is telling them the importance of perseverance.

Romans 2:6-7

*God "will give to each person according to what he has done." To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life.*

This will be the final verse used to demonstrate the fact that salvation is not a point in time event that is over and done with. Salvation is a process. Paul tells the Romans that those who persist in doing good will be given eternal life. The opposite of course is that if one does not persist that they will not. There is an implied condition in this verse that plants the question, "Why do we need to persist?"

Other verses that appear to elucidate a non-ES position are simply listed here for brevity. The reader is asked to read and meditate on these verses also. There are more that can be added, but at this point that would be just beating a dead horse.

Ezekiel 3:20

I Timothy 1:18-20, 3:6-7, 4:1, 5:15, 6:10

II Timothy 2:11-12, 2:18 (ref I Tim. 1:18)

Colossians 1:21-24

I John 2:24

## **Various Harmonization Approaches**

Because all Christians understand that the Bible must be internally consistent, a proponent of ES must address each and every one of these verses to maintain their position. Following this introduction are some of the more common approaches used to accomplish just that. Some approaches may be better than others, and there may be more, but these are the ones that I have heard. Historically however, the hardest one for ES adherents to nullify has been the Hebrews 6 and 10 passages covered previously. If a verse is going to cause turmoil, these appear to be it.

### **Temporary Saving Grace (TSG)**

This approach was used by John Calvin to defend his position. He realized that there were many verses in apparent opposition to his view, therefore he formulated this reply. God does not always issue "permanent saving grace" whose recipients would be eternally secure. No, God can give someone "temporary saving grace" which means that they look and act like real Christians, and in fact they are, until some time in the future when God withdraws his grace and they "fall". Only God knows who has permanent and who has temporary saving grace. Therefore you may be eternally secure, but you have no ability to know it. How this is to give the saint any security at all is beyond me, however this is his teaching.

While this may seem odd on the surface, it really cannot be refuted. He agrees that the non-ES passages are indeed true, but that this only addresses a subclass of people, not those who are "permanently" saved. While this approach is brilliant, it only moves the ball slightly. Now instead of defending ES, you must be able to defend "TSG". ES is hard enough to defend, but TSG is nearly impossible. The approach taken however is the example of Judas. Judas was one with Jesus, but eventually fell. This fall, as it is reasoned, was orchestrated by God's eternal decree using John 17:12 as a proof text. If you place all these things together, and believe them, you can use this approach.

The real problem however with this approach is what it does in our minds to the character and truthfulness of God. If God toys with us in such a capricious fashion, then most people would reject Him as being a loving God. Setting people up to perform the most

malicious practical joke in the universe is hardly one who "is light, and in Him is no darkness at all."

**It is possible, but God kills you before it happens.**

This approach again yields to the non-ES evidence, but then rejects it with a twist. They may use the Ezekiel passages listed above as a proof text; however I have not heard this linkage before by one making this point. Here, it is possible to lose your salvation, but just before you do, God strikes you dead so that you never ultimately cross that line.

Like the first approach, this one disarms the non-ES view by agreeing with it. However, the clever twist at the end is what preserves the ES doctrine. Can this approach be Biblically defended? Has anyone seen this actually happen?

As an example against this proposition, one could think about children. Most Arminianists believe that all children born who die before a certain "age of accountability" will go to heaven. Therefore, if an infant dies, they are taken up to God's waiting arms, not to Hell to burn forever. (I am not going to touch on Original Sin here either!) If one accepts this basic concept, then there must be a point during a person's development when they cross that line from going to Heaven to going to Hell. If God killed everyone to prevent them from crossing that line to Hell, wouldn't it be logical to believe that he would be into wholesale killing of small children? God would not allow us to become adults so that we can commit apostasy. Someone might even defend abortion as a means used by God to increase the population of Heaven. While I do believe that all aborted (murdered) children do in fact enter Heaven's gates, I don't think that God is the one who developed or approved the implementation of this plan.

If God does not do this here, the He becomes open to a charge of capriciousness and favoritism. If our doctrines make it logical for people to level such charges against our Lord, I suggest we seriously reevaluate our doctrine.

**They weren't really saved to begin with.**

This is the most common argument for ES. This approach utilizes Scriptures such as:

Matthew 7:21-23

*Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons, and perform many miracles?" Then I will tell them plainly, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!"*

From this passage we can see that there are people who will talk, act and walk like real Christians, but they are not and never were. We all need to be sure we are not as self-deceived as these people. (I would suggest studying the Atonement for this.) Therefore

the thought goes, if someone does appear to fall from Grace, it really isn't a fall, as they were never really saved in the first place.

This approach however is an amazing boomerang for the ES adherent. If these people were so self-deceived to believe that they were saved while all along they were not, what gives the advocates of ES the "assurance" that they are not in the same camp? Surely these people so believed that they were "secure" that even meeting Christ face to face in all His glory was not enough to dislodge their fantasy. This question is eternally vital for those who believe in ES. If they cannot show via some other mechanism that they are not deceived, then they might be also holding a forged ticket to Heaven.

Arminianists who deny the doctrine of ES also believe that someone can find himself in this condition. The difference is that it is not shown that everyone can be placed in this category. This approach is probably the weakest of all because no attempt is made to harmonize the many apparent contradictory Scripture verses above, but only to divert our attention to another problem altogether (people who are deceived). Hebrews 6 however stands in strong opposition to this idea. Therefore Arminianists do not deny that there will be found who fit into this category, but that this is not the only possible category that one can fit into.

The next problem with this approach is that while ES may be true, you cannot ever know that you are indeed included. By this I mean that the only indication that one has never been saved is the final act of apostasy. Previous to this act however, everyone would believe that they were indeed saved including the individual. Many pastors in fact who have dynamic ministries have later gone and left the faith. I have personal knowledge of specific cases and no doubt the reader probably does as well. If ask these people if their former beliefs were genuine they would answer in the affirmative.

This defense of ES must state that these men of God were never saved. Somehow they dedicated their lives to the Lord and his work. They appeared to operate in the blessing and presence of the Holy Spirit. Many came to a legitimate saving faith through their works, yet in the end we "know" that all of this was accomplished without a saving relationship with Christ. This should strike fear into every believer. How do we in fact know that we are not deceived and that our final act of apostasy is coming up tomorrow? That only tomorrow will we understand that everything that we have done up until this point was a mere illusion. This is the problem with only having a post-fall test of salvation. We can never know if a fall is indeed in our future until we are dead. More on this will be discussed later in the "True to Reason" section.

### **The anti-ES verses talk about a dual nature of salvation (temporal/eternal)**

This final method of harmonization also does not attempt to deny that the above listed anti-ES verses signal that something is lost by the believer. However this approach breaks up salvation into two different and mutually exclusive parts. This approach comes

from the Primitive Baptist denomination, but I do not know if that denomination uses it exclusively.

This approach says that salvation has both an earthly and an eternal component. All of the verses that are pro-ES speak to the eternal component; while the anti-ES verse speak exclusively to the temporal side.

The physical or temporal component addresses what God wants to do for us while we are on Earth and the spiritual component what we will have in eternity. Therefore, if we continue to sin and create havoc here, God will not be able to bless us materially, but sinning has no affect whatsoever on our eternal destination.

This approach also harmonizes all of the verses by agreeing with the non-ES position but then creates two categories of what "salvation" means. Yes you can lose your earthly salvation, but not your heavenly one. However I can find no such distinction outlining two aspects of salvation in the Bible. While this method does solve the apparent problem, you will have to take on faith the premise on which it is built.

This method of harmonization however, appears to violate sound hermeneutical practice. We can not clearly see and understand this bifurcated salvation plan from a plain reading of Scripture, but once we have the idea, we can then search Scripture for Biblical support. This is the opposite of what should be done. Any doctrine, not matter how aberrant can be pulled from Scripture. Every Christian based cult on the planet has done just this. This practice is unsound and should be avoided at all costs and any doctrine that needs to utilize this dubious approach should be carefully considered.

## **What about a Covenant?**

The Bible details the covenant that God has made with man. Therefore, it would be helpful to understand just what a covenant means Biblically. Some teachings go into various sub-covenants (Adamic, Noahidic, Davidic, ...) but that is not the thrust here.

A Covenant is made between two parties. For our purposes this is between God and man. A covenant comes with roles and responsibilities imposed on both parties (see Deuteronomy 28 for an excellent example). As long as both parties maintain the covenant, then each party blesses the other one. However, if either party breaks the covenant, than it is incumbent on the offended party to bring the requisite curses upon the head of the offending party. It must be understood that all Biblical convents have both blessings and curses. Blessings are for obedience, and curses are for disobedience.

For our case, we know that God will never break his covenant with us. However, can we not break our covenant with God? Arminianists believe that we must voluntarily come into covenant with God. Once we are in this covenant, nothing can break it except for us. We are the sole determiner on whether or not God brings blessings or curses. This is the light in which non-ES adherents look at all of the pro-ES passages listed above. When

the Bible says no one can snatch you, it is looking solely at external influences. With this context, one can see how the pro-ES passages can be read in a more general way.

The concept of covenant keeping is also in line with the idea that salvation is not simply a point in time event, but also a process that must be eternally walked in. Here we enter into the covenant, and we must also maintain the provisions of the covenant to remain within its provisions. The concept of a covenant is lost to those espousing ES, for you cannot have the promised blessings and ignore the curses.

### **Using the Hermeneutical Tripod**

So far we have been mainly looking at verses both pro and con concerning ES. This is necessary to establish if the doctrine is Biblically based and Biblically accurate. I believe a compelling case can be made that ES is Biblically based. Several different Scriptures can be shown to at least imply it. The question however is; can it be shown to be Biblically accurate. In order to do this, the proponent of ES must be able to harmonize all of the non-ES Scriptures with this doctrine. I have not been able to do this. I have read a book published by a professor of theology from New Orleans Theological Seminary who attempted to show how Hebrews 6 was consistent with ES (see Addendum A). The fact that an entire book was required from such a learned individual to address this single verse should tell most people that there is a significant amount to nuance to the argument. In the end however, I could not see where the case was made. The basic premise what that the author was not addressing those who were saved, but those who went to church and heard the message but rejected it. The idea of Paul warning sinners who associate with saints that they can "fall away" just appears to me as fanciful. What are they falling from? They are sinners. If the atonement of Christ cannot save sinners then we really must visit the entire doctrine of the universal atonement. Is the cross able to save all sinners or not? This approach requires that the cross of Christ is unable to save sinners who attend church. If this be the case, then we are in some very deep trouble as far as I can see. The reader can do more research in this area, but for me his argument seems exceedingly weak, especially coming from the caliber of this man.

Therefore, I believe that the proponents of ES still haven't made the case that ES is Biblically accurate. This is obviously a personal position, and the reader is encouraged to do additional research on this topic to see if they or any other writers can answer the non-exhaustive Scriptural list above. However, it is always instructive to the hermeneutical tripod to see if this doctrine can stand on its own.

### **True to Reason?**

Once a doctrine has been shown to be Biblically based, another rich source of insight is if it is also true to reason. For this we can first look at the demonstrated character of God and see if ES can be shown to be consistent with it. If not, then ES would be shown to impugn the character of God and such a doctrine should not be propagated. I will address

a few issues that the reader should think about. I do not say that these issues are of themselves doctrine killers, but one cannot simultaneously defend a doctrine and the character of God, I would hope that the doctrine would be given a second look.

### ES requires that we lose our freewill

Now freewill is not an open and shut case. There are those who claim that as "freewill" is not a Biblical term and that there is really no such thing. They would say that freewill is an invention of our minds and that no such thing actually exists. Then there are the Calvinists who believe in Compatibilistic Freewill. This is the view that we freely choose what we desire, but it is God who gives us our desires. This form of freewill requires that what we do is not originated in us, but originated outside of us and imposed on us. This is the definition of a robot. You program the robot to perform certain actions and then claim that it is freely choosing to carry them out. Compatibilistic Freewill claims to harmonize how we freely choose what God has ordained.

The final view is that which most people understand when they discuss freewill. This is properly designated Libertarian Freewill. Libertarian Freewill is the ability to choose between competing ideas. We can choose to speak or not to speak. There is nothing controlling our actions outside of ourselves. It is this type of freewill that is incompatible with ES.

The existence of libertarian freewill requires that options are always available to the individual. If there are no options available, then the action cannot be a freewill action. As an example, if someone hits me in the head with a bat, that would be a freewill decision for them but not me. If I had any say, then I would have chosen not to be hit. If I could not choose this, then it is not a freewill decision.

Now let's look at ES. ES states that once you are saved, nothing can alter this fact. Therefore this is the very definition of an absence of freewill, you cannot choose something. If you as an individual cannot do something, you are not free in that regard. This is the reason why Calvinism, the birthplace of ES, does not believe in libertarian freewill. They simply cannot. They believe that God places in each believer the desire to be saved, and therefore they can only choose this one option. If God continues to have them desire salvation, then they have no choice but to comply. However, how can an Arminianist believer who ascribes to libertarian freewill hold ES? Then only possibility is that we must lose our freewill in regards to salvation after we have been saved. While we maintain our freewill in other areas, when it comes to salvation, we are no longer free. If you do not believe this, then you cannot believe in ES. We freely chose to come to God; we can freely choose to leave God. Anything short of this will have a head on collision with libertarian freewill. Therefore the Arminianist believer must choose between freewill and ES. (Isn't ironic that you will need to exercise your freewill in order to deny it and instead believe ES?)

## The Case of the Holy Spirit Eraser

Years ago I was having a conversation with a dear friend of mine who believed in ES. She asked me a very good question concerning the Book of Life. I don't believe that it is a controversial belief that once someone is truly saved, his or her name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Therefore, if one could forfeit their salvation at some later time, then what happens to their name? Upon hearing this question, I then pondered that this would require a "Holy Spirit Eraser". Therefore a real test could be made to see if there are any hints in Scripture whereby one could see a possible mechanism for God removing someone who had previously been written in this book. I will admit at this time in my Christian walk, I had no idea if I would be successful, but I started on my journey. Here is what I found.

From David, a man after God's own heart:

Psalms 69:28,

*May they be blotted out of the book of life and not be listed with the righteous.*

Now one could say that David had no way of knowing if the people he was referring to were actually in the book, but this would miss a crucial point. With this expression, David is obviously not a believer in ES. He clearly believes that God can answer his prayer. Even if this is hyperbole the point still remains. A major OT figure espoused the very concept of my "Holy Spirit Eraser". (Well I was getting excited.)

Next we see another very key OT figure with the same exact concept. This verse however carries so much more weight as God replies.

Exodus 33:32

*But now, please forgive their sin - but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written. The Lord replied to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book."*

Now this really is a primary support text for the "eraser" concept. Clearly again we see that Moses could not have uttered these words and also believed in ES. Therefore we have two major OT figures refuting ES, but the atomic bomb is God's reply. God himself says that "whoever has sinned against me" he will blot out of His book. Now please note that these people who are sinning are "IN" the book. To say that they weren't really saved when God had their names inscribed in the book would be senseless. However God is quite emphatic about what he "will" do to those whose names have been written in His book after they "sinned against him". I sincerely hope that this verse will give pause to those who believe that they can sin in thought, word, and deed, everyday without eternal consequence. Before I go on however, I would like to make one correction to my initial concept. Notice that God does not erase, he blots.

Why is this important? Basically, when the person's name was written, it was written in such a manner as it permanent. No disappearing ink, and in fact, I don't believe that any

solvent under heaven would be enough to ever dull its appearance. This reminds me of the security of the believer talked about by Peter in II Peter 3:17 when he warns us not to fall from our "secure" position. Yes we are secure, but God is not without recourse if we choose to sin against him. Blotting is a very descriptive term. One of the dictionary definitions pertaining to writing says: "to obliterate". Once someone's name has been obliterated from God's book, would anyone believe that this person is still in good standing with God and ready to enter into God's eternal rest?

Finally, we have a very good secondary proof verse in Revelation 3:5.

*He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.*

The obvious converse of this passage is that non-overcomers will in fact be blotted out. What would make someone a non-overcomer? Exodus says that "sinning against God" is what is necessary.

So is it reasonable that God would blot someone out of the book of life? I believe that it is so.

### Eternal Insecurity

Now I will not delve into every aspect of this concept as this would take another paper altogether, but I do want to introduce it here as it is a powerful concept to think about.

Up until this point we have really been talking about can we do anything while still on Earth that will impact our position in the eternal heaven. Now we will basically look at ES from a totally different perspective. One could ask, "Is there anything we can do in heaven to get us kicked out?" If we are not "secure" in heaven, how could we possibly be "secure" here?

Chances are that many people have never thought about this before. We all simply assume that the hard part is making it to heaven and assume that once we are there that this will be just a downhill coast. So the question that begs to be asked is, "Can we sin in heaven, and if so, what will happen?"

Now for a simple case study let's look at the history of Satan. It isn't in dispute that at one time Satan (a.k.a. Lucifer) was an angel in good standing in heaven. We also have one third of the angelic host standing in league with him against God. At some point in history past, all of these individuals committed the first known sins by rebelling against God. Therefore we see that yes indeed, free moral agents in heaven have the undeniable ability to sin. Next we need to see what happened? Did God have recourse or was he constrained to allow them to stay in his Kingdom as some permanent rebellious entity? Again, it is not really in dispute that God cast every free moral agent who sinned against him out of heaven.

Now we have one final question that must be asked. Is there a chance that any of them will get a second chance to come back and be good boys and girls? I believe again that their overwhelming understanding of Christians is "no". In conclusion, we see that it is possible to sin in heaven. We also see that the consequence of such a deed is eternal separation from God, as there is no atonement possible for anyone who sins in God's presence.

I hope that one can follow my train of thought here. Just pulling from what we all believe, we can sin in heaven, and ONE sin will have us cast forever out of God's presence. With this being the case, how can one possibly claim that we can have ES here on Earth when we do not have it in heaven?

Before I move on however, these thoughts might be quite disturbing to some who have never thought about them before. Please do not conclude that as you have an eternity to mess up, that it is only a matter of time before you are kicked out of heaven. Remember that 2/3rds of the angelic host have had no problem doing this very thing. If the reader would like to delve into this a bit farther with me, I would be delighted.

### ES Promotes Antinomianism

For those unfamiliar with the term antinomianism, the 1828 Webster's Dictionary states:

One of a sect who maintains, that under the Gospel dispensation, the law is of no use or obligation; or who hold doctrines which supersede the necessity of good works and the virtuous life. This sect originated with John Agricola about the year 1538.

And for you who prefer a more modern look at the word, Dictionary.com states:

1. *Theology*. The doctrine or belief that the Gospel frees Christians from required obedience to any law, whether scriptural, civil, or moral, and that salvation is attained solely through faith and the gift of divine grace.
2. The belief that moral laws are relative in meaning and application as opposed to fixed or universal.

If you believe in ES, you appear to be an Antinomianist. Why do I say this? Because believers in ES do not believe that any sinful action can negatively impact their status with God. They believe that no matter how many sins they commit, they maintain a covenant relationship with God. They are above the law. Basically they indirectly imply that God works with two different standards. God holds sinners to the Law, and the "saints" are above the law and are no longer bound to obey it. This is the reason why sin can no longer impact their eternal destiny. Surely everyone has heard the comment, "We are no longer under the law." This is a clear antinomianist statement.

## God Holds a Double Standard of Conduct

If someone is not in a covenant relationship with God sins, their sins will add to their moral guilt before God. They will indeed suffer for all eternity for the cost of that one sin. In fact, a person who only has a solitary sin against them is worthy of eternal torment. Now let's look at an ES believer. Imagine that they are in the same boat with the sinner. They do exactly the same things as the sinner, or maybe even worse. Maybe the sinner lusts after someone, while the "believer" commits a dozen acts of adultery. The sinner will be judged and sent to Hell, while the Christian will not suffer any eternal loss. Yes they may have to undergo some earthly consequences, but nothing will be done to alter their eternal designation. Would you think that the sinner suffering in Hell might have the idea cross his mind that God didn't treat him fairly? Does he have a case? ES says that God does not judge on actions but on position. The standard of justice to be applied to someone is based not on actions, deeds, or thoughts, but solely on the fact of whether you are saved or not. Actions to God are of little consequence except of the all-important one of being saved. Once this single act is behind the believer, all subsequent acts are of no eternal importance. Does this seem right or absurd?

Now most believers in ES will say that if one is "truly" saved, they will not do these things. With this I can agree; however I cannot stay on this ride too long. Clearly many who claim to be eternally secured have sinned and many have sinned quite grievously. We see coveting, adultery, lying, stealing, gossip, and almost every other sin under the Sun being practiced by people claiming security. So what is it that saint will not do? Are we only to "try" not to sin? Is the distinction between saint and sinner not that we don't both do the same things but that the saint first tries not to? Is this the Good News? That we should at first try to resist temptation before plunging head long into debauchery? This is a strange Gospel indeed!

ES try to have their cake and eat it to. They say that no sin can separate them from God, and yet a saint will not sin. They then typically believe that saints sin in thought word and deed on a daily basis. Well does this mean that they aren't saved, or that it doesn't matter?

I have even heard some purveyors of ES teach that there isn't even a need for the "believer" to repent as all their future sins have already been covered. The sin is paid for by God, so what is your meaningless effort going to bring to the table as compared to the grace of God? Now not all ES believers would go this far, but if they were logically consistent with their doctrine they all should.

In Romans we see that Paul in 2:9-14 addresses this very issue.

*There will be trouble and distress for EVERY human who does evil...*

Here the ES proponents must either believe that Paul only meant all sinners who do evil, which is a nonsense statement, or that Paul was only addressing God bringing distress

only while on earth. This approach may alleviate the immediate verse, but shortly after in verse 11 we see Paul state:

*For God does not show favoritism.*

How can this be harmonized with ES? If God sends one person to Hell for committing a certain sin, and doesn't send another for doing the same action we see a double standard at work. Does God not judge our actions? Let's look again at Ezekiel 18.

*But if a righteous man turns from his righteousness and commits sin and does the same detestable things the wicked man does, will he live? None of the righteous things he has done will be remembered. Because of the unfaithfulness he is guilty of and because of the sins he has committed, he will die*

Doesn't this state that if sinners and saints do the same things that the saint is in serious trouble?

This brings to mind a parent who has a favored child. They give much more latitude to the one than the other. The non-favored child gets strict discipline while the favored child gets off the hook. In ES then, we have "sinning Christians" going to Heaven, and sinning apostates going to Hell. This view must not be projected in any doctrine as it automatically impugns the character of God.

The question must be asked: How many sins did Adam commit before being thrown out of the Garden? One. How many sins does it take to send someone who is not a Christian to Hell? One. How many sins can a Christian commit without any loss of eternal benefits? Infinite. Can everyone see the apparent double standard? From this the reader should be able to better understand my comments in the preface of this paper. There appears to be a big difference in what ES people believe about salvation and the Atonement than those not holding this view.

As an illustration I would like to review what Paul is saying in Romans 2:17-24 and change the wording around a bit to better highlight this point. All of the altered words will be underlined.

*Now you, if you call yourself a Christian; if you rely on God's grace and brag about your relationship to God; if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the Holy Spirit; if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the New Testament the embodiment of knowledge and truth- you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who brag about the God's grace, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the unbelievers because of you."*

Please notice that with the changing of very few words, these verses can produce a serious indictment against the teachings of our modern day churches. Isn't Paul pointing out that those who call themselves "the chosen" cannot go about doing the exact same things as unbelievers? That when a Christian sins and then preaches against sin he is a hypocrite? Isn't this the very definition of the word? And the final point could not be truer. The Jews were not obeying the Law and the repercussions of this were felt far outside the Jewish community.

Isn't Paul saying that God does not play favorites? That those who are His chosen people are dishonoring Him when they sin? Is this not important to God? Will not God do something about sinning Christians? Is this something only relegated to this life?

### Was Judas Saved?

This is a very important case to look at to see if we can in fact come up with such an obvious example of even one of Christ's apostles forfeiting his salvation. ES proponents must believe that Judas was never saved in the first place or believe that he was saved and is currently in Heaven. No middle ground is possible if ES is true.

#### Mark 3:13-19

*Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter) James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means Sons of Thunder) Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.*

Here we see the use of some very contingent language (might), but also a stated purpose. The twelve were picked to be with him, so that they could be sent out to preach and also have the authority to drive out demons. Notice that it doesn't say that this was the plan for eleven and one was just picked so that he could later go on to betray Christ. Now if Judas was never saved, we have Christ preparing a sinner for ministry. We have Christ granting a sinner the ability to cast out demons. This should appear quite strange to anyone that Christ would do such a thing. Now let's see this in practice. The next passage is quite long, but Jesus has the twelve doing many things and sinners just shouldn't do. I have underlines some things for emphasis.

#### Matthew 10:1-20

*He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.*

*These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.*

*These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep.*

*"Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. As you enter the home, give it your greeting. If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you. If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.*

*"Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues. On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, or it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.*

Now does this sound like those able to do such things were evil? Will God grant such abilities to a sinner? Will God call a sinner a sheep, and declare that they are innocent and give the sinner the peace of the Holy Spirit? If God would do such a thing, then wouldn't it be understandable that the sinner might get the inkling that they are saved. Therefore God is actively deceiving them into a false delusion. This just doesn't put our Lord in a very good light.

Do you remember what happened when the seven sons of Sceva decided to try this very thing?

Acts 19:13-16

*Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon possessed. They would say, "In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. (One day) the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.*

Now when it says that they were driving out evil spirits we do not have to believe that they were in fact doing this only that this is what they were supposed to be doing.

Basically these brothers were first century snake oil salesmen. Now when they came across a real demon, we see what the end result was.

In Luke, we again have Christ sending out people and this time with an amazing declaration.

Luke 10:20

*However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.*

This was spoken by Jesus after the return of the seventy two disciples who were sent out. While the twelve are not specifically mentioned in this passage, it appears quite plausible that Judas and the other eleven apostles were in this group. Here Jesus tells them that they should rejoice that their names are written in heaven. This is a clear declaration from Christ that their names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

A similar point that Judas was once saved can be found in Matthew 19:28.

*Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."*

When Jesus said this, he was talking to the twelve apostles. Judas was in this group. Did Judas maintain this position; do you expect to see him in heaven seated on a throne? If ES is true, does Jesus have an integrity problem? Who is on that twelfth throne? This thought brings out clearly the magnitude of the fall of Judas. Judas went from a position unique to only twelve people picked from the entire history of mankind from Adam to the last, to one consigned to the lowest depths of Hell. Only Satan's fall could rival such a calamity. This however is not a possibility for ES proponents because Judas could have never really fallen. Either he was saved and he is now on that throne, or he was never to be on that throne and was always destined for Hell.

John 6:67-71

*From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God." Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!" (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.)*

Now some may take this verse as proof that Judas was never saved. I however do not think that this is what this passage is saying. Jesus said this in context that many of the disciples were choosing to leave. That is a mouthful in itself. The definition of this word (Greek: μαθητων) is: Those among the Jews who followed him, joined his party, and became his adherents. (An adherent is: *someone who believes and helps to spread the doctrine of another*) Now this isn't an open and shut case, but there is pretty good

evidence that there were people in this group who many would have believed would have been saved. If this is the case, when they no longer followed him did they lose their salvation or did they retain it? Did they help Christ spread the Gospel but they were never saved? Good questions all!

Now back to Judas. With Jesus seeing all of these people leaving him, he reflects back that even one of the chosen twelve is also choosing to leave. This doesn't have to mean that he was a devil from the beginning, but that he was one now. If this is the case, then ES cannot be true. The reader must decide.

Finally on the case of Judas, so much more could be said. Even now I can hear many questions that people would want answers too such as John 6:64, and Acts 1:16, however; this paper was never intended to provide an exhaustive critique on Judas. This will be reserved for another paper altogether.

So is ES true to reason? The reader must decide this. Can we show how God doesn't have two standards of conduct? Is Antinomianism correct and Christians are above the law? Do we lose our freewill after salvation and if not how can we then not choose to leave God? Is God ambivalent to our deeds? And finally, was Judas ever in a right relationship with God or was he always lost and destined for Hell?

## **True to Life?**

Next we must take up the mantle of Christ's hermeneutical method and see if there are any life situations that are parallels to this topic.

Is it a good thing to be "above" the law?

The bottom line of ES is that Christians are no longer judged by the law. Somehow the Atonement of Christ has so fulfilled the law that obedience to it no longer is required. Sure all Christians must strive to live a sinless life, but if they miss here and there, there are no worries. Some ES proponents go farther with this line of thinking than others but I am not trying to paint with too broad a brush. However, I would believe that most would believe that if a Christian died in the act of sin that they would not have to be concerned about anything.

Now let's look at what happens to people the moment they understand that the law holds no sway over them. Do they then strive to hold to the letter of the law or do they start to lose regard for it? What did Voltaire say? "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." This has been shown to be true through thousands of years of human history. Uday and Qsay Hussein are two very good examples of this. They were above any law. They could kill, steal, rape, torture without consequence. So did they do this or not? Of course they did, this is only human nature. Our natures will romp anywhere they are able. It is almost a certainty that you can give someone the ability to do something

and sooner or later they will do it. So if the believer truly believes that actions no longer hold any sway over the believer, then sooner or later, many will indeed indulge.

So why don't many who hold this doctrine do just this? This is because even though the doctrine in their head says that this is the case, their hearts cannot square with it. We see this all of the time where people say that they believe one thing, but they only ascribe to it intellectually, but in practice they deny it. As an example, Calvinists believe that prayer doesn't change God's mind. That God's actions are never affected by prayer and that prayer never changes anything. But do they pray? Certainly. Do they pray in such a way that God would change things? Yes. So why do they do this if they don't believe it? The answer is simple. They do believe it in their hearts, it is just the theology in their heads that deny it. People operate far more from what is in their hearts than what is in their heads. True life change happens however whenever we can get our hearts and minds in harmony. Godly supporters of ES therefore don't really believe it in their hearts. ES is a total head belief and if ever fully assimilated into the heart will surely manifest all sorts of sin in the life of the "believer". This is my opinion and it may land me into some pretty hot water, but so be it.

Now to fully understand the relationship between the saint and the law is a very good study indeed, and one that I would recommend everyone taking. It just so happens that I have a in-depth presentation on this very topic so that everyone can fully understand why God sent the Old Testament Law and how it relates to the New Testament believer. (shameless plug.. sorry).

#### Would you think it good if your neighbor was above the law?

Next we must look at if you believe that it would be a good thing for anyone to be above the law. Let's look at your neighbor. The president has just declared that he is no longer bound to any law. Now do you feel good and safe living next to this person? Would you be very careful not to get him upset? If he came and stole your car would you feel good that you have no legal recourse?

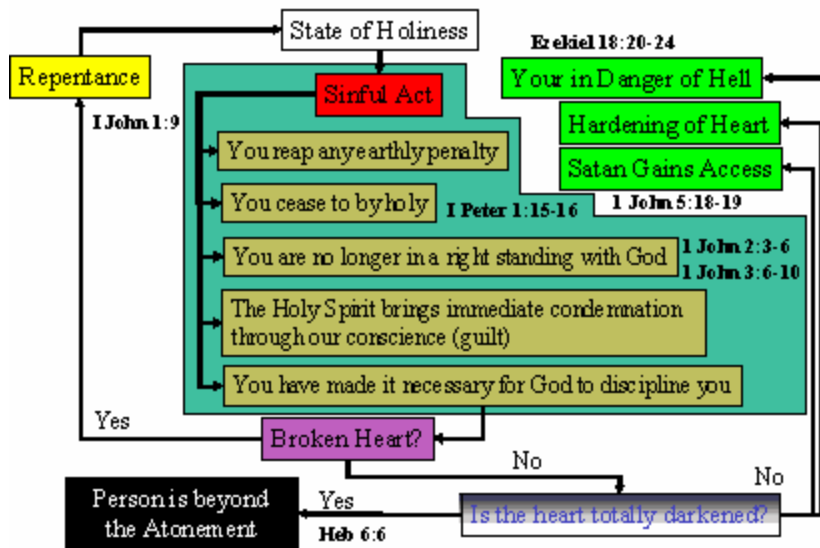
I would contend that no one would ever want any human to be above our laws for any reason and at any time. Laws are put in place to protect law-abiding people. Law abiding people love the laws as it affords them protection. Therefore if it is not desirable for people to live outside the laws of man that were derived from the laws of God, why would God place people outside his own laws? This just seems a bit counter productive to holy living.

Another example is that apparently the angels are not above the law. If so, why couldn't Lucifer rebel and still maintain his position? Clearly this is a preposterous proposition, but wouldn't the teaching of ES support such a view? So God holds angels accountable for their behavior and it affects their eternal destiny. God holds sinners accountable for their behavior and it affects their eternal destiny. However, when it comes to the "saved" all of this goes out the door. Does this seem right?

## God is a bad parent

Some of you might be parents, but all of you have been children so that you can assess this view from one vantage point or another. How would you feel if your parents always let your sibling off the hook for nearly every infraction of the family rules, but you yourself were held to the very highest standard? Would you be able to claim as Paul does in Romans 2 that God does not show favoritism or would you decry favoritism at every chance?

## What Happens If a Christian Sins



The only option that ES believers have is to find something in the Atonement whereby somehow this all becomes fair. (I have another presentation on this also. ☺) Something in the death and resurrection of Christ has enabled God to forgive without consequence to the believer even if that believer doesn't repent or ask.

Most believe in I John 1:9

*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

The point here however is that we must confess and repent. On this point there is no difference between the two views. However ES proponents cannot simply stop here. Because what happens if they do not confess or do not repent? ES says that nothing happens, and the detractors of ES say that the saint has a serious problem. If we do not have to repent or confess than why mention it? If we have to, what happens if we do not? ES holds these verses to be mere suggestions and not commands.

So in conclusion, it appears that there are some difficulties squaring ES with life and reason. This is not to say that they cannot, but the opposing view does not have these problems. Loving parents kick rebellious children out of the house all of the time. Sure

they still love them and long for their return, but for various reasons, they can no longer support this rebellious child. If anyone believes that the non-ES view does present a problem in regards to life or reason, I would love to hear your view.

## Conclusion

It is hoped that the reader of this paper will be better informed on the issue of eternal security. I have attempted to give both sides of this issue a fair critique. The reader can decide how well I accomplished this goal. However, in the end, take what has been stated here, read more, pray, and seek the Holy Spirit's guidance on this issue.

In the end, one must decide whether salvation is merely a once in a lifetime event, or the beginning of a process that will last literally throughout all eternity. As Paul said,

Colossians 2:18-19

*Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize, Such a person goes to great detail about what he has seen, and his unspiritual mind puffs him up with idle notions. He has lost connection with the Head, from the whole body....*

The question becomes if you cannot be disqualified then why mention it? Is this just nonsense uttered by Paul? Again, how can someone lose connection to the head, which is Christ, if they were never connected in the first place? Having a sinner connected to Christ would certainly require a new doctrine.

And....

Hebrews 3:12-14

*See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God, but encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.*

Here we see that the author is addressing "brothers". They are to see that none of them (brothers) has a sinful unbelieving heart that turns away. Now is he being overly generous by calling sinners brothers, was he addressing his actual siblings? He goes on to say that these brothers can have their hearts hardened and he finishes with that they will share with Christ only if they hold on to the end. Why such wording? One might even think that the author of Hebrews had never heard of ES.

Regardless of what you finally believe about this issue, make every effort to "hold firmly till the end".

It is my desire to present the case of ES as accurately as I can. I therefore would love to dialog with anyone who still believes after reading this paper that ES is still the most

Biblically sound position. If they have harmonized all of the passages in this paper or even just one, I would like to hear it. I will put all such correspondence in a new addendum. I would also love to have more ES proof texts so that I can work on harmonizing them with my views. In the end however, for any view to be Biblically accurate it must show for a positive case and be able to harmonize all Scripture in apparent opposition. The reader can decide if I have done a good and logical refutation or it was a lot of smoke and mirrors. You run into a lot of smoke and mirrors sometimes when you discuss theology.

Have a great day and thank you for reading this paper. I hope that it has in some way impacted your life.

## Addendum A

After circulating this document around to different people for comments and reading various books and handouts, I feel that it would be good to add some of the ideas gleaned from this process into this work in order to make it more complete. As stated previously, the real problem that ES proponents have centers on the book of Hebrews. Not to say this is the only problematic area, but it surely presents the most difficult case. I will endeavor to summarize what various pro-ES scholars have said on this issue and then review it. The main passage that I will review is:

Hebrews 6: 4-6

*It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.*

### The Pro-ES Position

Proponents of ES realize that all Scripture must harmonize and therefore if ES is true, a rational explanation of why this passage doesn't mean what it appears to say must be found. Below is a short synopsis of what they have developed.

#### Understanding the Audience

Determining the context of any work is crucial in determining its intended meaning. This is a basic rule of hermeneutics that is not in question. Therefore, the proponents of ES try to set out a case that the book of Hebrews was written to a group of Christian Jews who were fellowshiping with Non-Christian Jews.

Support is lent from the list of doctrines that they were focusing on. These include repentance, faith in God, baptisms, laying of hands, resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. The gist of the argument is that the Christian Jews had watered down the Gospel message to these points only so that they would not offend the other non-believing Jews in their midst. Their idea was to win the non-believers over by Christian fellowship and not offending them. The writer of Hebrews was making a point that they needed to stop this effort and move on to the greater work.

However how strongly can this case be made? It appears that this scenario is possible, but it can hardly be proven beyond even a modest doubt. Potential "could be" or "might be" is a strong foundation to stand on when one's case rests on this hypothesis.

Problems however are found in these assumptions. First, to the first century Jew, he was not baptized but circumcised. Only Christians were baptized and this was a very big deal indeed. Once you were baptized you were marked as a Christian. Being baptized represents a point of no return. Even today, Muslims who are baptized can be marked for

death once they are baptized. Jews who accept Yeshua as their Messiah can be shunned from their families for the rest of their lives. The point of no return is marked at their baptism. Therefore, I cannot see how teachings about baptisms (water immersion (for repentance) and Holy Spirit indwelling (salvation)) would not be controversial topics in such a mixed Synagogue.

### Grammar Usage

An additional point is brought to bear which is the writer's use of person in this chapter. The writer uses first and second person declarations (us, we), but uses third person "those" in the beginning of verse 4. This is said to show that he was not including the intended audience in this group of those who cannot be brought back.

However, does the mixing of first, second and third person pronouns constitute a strong contention for the position being proposed? Whenever we are talking to a group of people and then desire to address only a subset of them, we must use this method. Clearly this is what the writer is doing. He isn't presupposing that every Christian will fall away, but only a subset of them might. Let me supply a simple story of a troop leader addressing his troops prior to battle.

Men, today "we" go out to fight the enemy. Let "us" not forget any of our training. "We" will march to the bridge. Some of us will cross the bridge others will stay put. "Those" who cross will not be able to retreat back for "we" well destroy the bridge.

Now one can easily see how the "person" can be mixed. Clearly we are still talking about the original troop (we). However, a subset of the group who are not determined now (they) will do something that will separate themselves from the group. The writer of Hebrews appears to be doing little more than this. In verse nine he states

*Even though we speak like this, dear friends, we are confident of better things in your case - things that accompany salvation.*

The writer doesn't appear to be saying that none of these people will be included as one who might fall way, but that they are "confident" that better things will happen. Basically, from what they now see, they believe that they will stand firm to the end. This can boil down to your basic pep talk. After this sound denunciation of those who walk this path, the writer then wraps his arms around the hearer and says, but for you we have confidence that you will be diligent so that such a fate will not befall you (my paraphrase). Basically, I believe that you will take this warning to heart and not become like the people I am warning you about.

### The Apostasy

As this case goes, those who the writer of Hebrews was addressing where not the Christian Jews in the group, but he was talking "by" them to the group of Non-Christian Jews who where fellowshipping with them. Basically, he is saying that these people are

forever lost, so don't worry about them anymore, but you need to spend your time evangelizing those who have a chance at repentance.

However one must ask can non-Christians perform the deeds in Hebrews 6? And if those who enter our churches in curiosity to hear the Gospel message are stepping near the fires of Hell, would it not be better for them never to come to church? Why risk such an event? Therefore, only those who are saved, or who are ready to come into immediate fellowship with God had better ever step foot into a house of worship. Somehow this seems odd. How can they crucify Jesus again? It doesn't appear that they even comprehend the atonement and therefore cannot reject it twice.

While it may be shocking for some to here this, it appears that the worst sin that one could commit (blasphemy of the Holy Spirit) can only be committed by Christians. One can understand this by how deeply one is wounded when someone betrays them who is dear to them. The pain of being wronged is compounded many fold if the antagonist is one whom we love. Sure strangers wound us, but we are wounded far deeper by our loved ones. Now that should make you think.