

Secured Salvation: A Homiletical Reflection on 1 Peter 1:3-9

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Abstract

This homiletical reflection explores the doctrine of eternal security in 1 Peter 1:3-9, offering preachers a framework for proclaiming the security of believers. Through an exegesis of 1 Peter 1:3-9, the study underscores that God, through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, is the source of believers' hope for eternal security, that through faith in Christ who is the efficient and mediating cause of salvation, believers are given a new birth, which resulted in a living hope that anticipates a future inheritance, that suffering is part of God's redemptive plan and it aimed at proving the genuineness of believers' faith, and that the result that accompanied believers' faith is the salvation of the soul. With these deductions, the article demonstrates how 1 Peter 1:3-9 may be preached in ways that picture the biblical perspective of secured salvation.

Key Words: Eternal Security, Secured, Salvation, Suffering, Homiletical

Introduction

There are several issues in the history and development of the church that are subjects of debate and one of such is the doctrine of eternal security (also called the perseverance of the Saints). The debate has assumed a new dimension in the 21st-century church. While some believed in eternal security that places responsibilities on an individual life, some argued for the opposite: sure salvation that is independent of how a

person lives. Moses Audi affirms that “the intensity of the discussion grew from the time of the reformation on.”¹ Eternal security is the biblical teaching that “those whom Christ chose and died for are eternally secure in their salvation.”² Since the doctrine bothers on the view of salvation, which determines the final state of the human soul, it is, therefore, cardinal to Christian living and its implication can never be overemphasized.

Meanwhile, various views have been expressed as to the doctrine of eternal security. Moses Audi identified two earliest views; Augustinian and Pelagian which has been expounded by Calvin and Arminius as Calvinist and Arminian views respectively.³ Arminian emphasizes human responsibility and a high possibility of losing one's faith (apostasy). This position was precipitated on the warning passages such as: (1 Cor. 15:2, Col. 1:22-23, Heb. 3:12, Heb. 6:4-6). Arminian also pointed to the words of Jesus in John 15: 1-6 that those who fail to abide in Christ are like a branch that is cut-off and is thrown away into the fire.

Conversely, Calvin argued that since God is the author as well as the one who perfect and secures salvation, it is not possible to lose one's salvation (apostasy is impossible). The position was taken based on Jesus words in John 3:16, 6:54, 10:28) and those of the Apostles (Romans 8:38-39, Eph. 1:14, 1 Pet. 1:9, Jude 24). These passages spoke of God, giving eternal and everlasting life. From these two positions, four other views have developed.⁴ The divergent of views, therefore, poses a

¹ Moses Audi, “How Does the Doctrine of Eternal Security Affect our Pastoral Theology?” *Testamentum Imperium: An International Theological Journal*, Volume 3, 2011, accessed September 20, 2024, from <http://www.preciousHeart.net/ti>.

² Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* Revised and Expanded (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014), 755.

³ Audi, “How Does the Doctrine of Eternal Security Affect our Pastoral Theology?”

⁴ The Classical Calvinism, Moderate Calvinism, Reformed Arminianism, and Wesleyan Arminianism. See J. Matthew Pinson, “Introduction.” In *Four*

challenge, the challenge of who is correct and to what degree since both Calvin and Arminian views are scripturally supported.

Apparently, the New Testament teaches eternal security that emphasizes God's sovereignty and human responsibility in salvation. Reginald E. White maintained that pastoral necessities dictated such dual approach. The believers amid persecution need assurance which demands more than mere encouragement but a doctrine of eternal security. However, for such assurance not to be taken lightly, it is necessary to give an appropriate warning.⁵ This dual approach is found in the text of 1Peter 1:3-9. Therefore, in this paper, the writer examines the doctrine of eternal security in the light of 1 Peter 1:3-9 and its homiletical implications. It seeks to discover the extent to which the claims of a new “revelations” from God that sue for salvation without human responsibility is true to the doctrines of the Bible and the established teachings of the Church.

Background to the Book of 1 Peter

Authorship and Date

The book of 1 Peter was written by the Apostle Peter, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus around 62-64 A.D.⁶ This is based on the fact that first Peter presented two references as to its author, and one as to its date. In First Peter 1:1, it says “Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ” and 5:1 reads “...fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed.” The reference to dating is in 5:13, “She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you

Views on Eternal Security. Edited by J. Matthew Pinson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 8-19 for a full discussion.

⁵ Reginald E. White, “Perseverance,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* 2nd Edition, Walter A. Elwell (ed.), (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2001), 908.

⁶ Thomas Hale, *The Applied New Testament Commentary.* (Eastbourne, England: Kingsway Publication, 1996), 951.

her greetings, and so does my son Mark." This suggests a period before the persecution under Nero at around 64-65 A. D. during which Peter was martyred.⁷ The tradition of the church has affirmed Apostle Peter's authorship of 1 and 2 Peter since the second century and has remained undisputed in the early church.⁸

However, recent scholarly work has strongly argued against the Petrine authorship mainly on three grounds. The first has to do with the date of composition. On this, the opponents held that the persecution described in the letter does not reflect that witnessed while Peter was alive but a worldwide, government-sponsored persecution experience at a period after Peter's death.⁹ The second ground bothers on the quality and style of the Greek, which was considered as being too refined to have come from the unlearned Galilean fishermen.¹⁰ The third argument concerns the heavy dependence of Peter on Paul views.¹¹ Therefore the modern biblical scholars posited that the first letter of Peter is pseudonymous.¹² These objections seem unconvincing based on the testimony of the letter itself.

⁷ William B. Barclay, "1 Peter," in *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament*, Michael J. Kruger, (ed.), (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2016), 456.

⁸ Duane F. Watson and Terrance Callan, *Commentaries on the New Testament: First and Second Peter* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2012), 3.

⁹ Barclay, "1 Peter," in *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament*, 455.

¹⁰ Thomas D. Lea and David Alan Black, *The New Testament: Its Background and Message*, second edition (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 526.

¹¹ Lea and Black, *The New Testament: Its Background and Message*, 528.

¹² Duane F. Watson and Terrance Callan, *Commentaries on the New Testament: First and Second Peter* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2012), 3.

Recipient and Purpose

The letter was written to the churches in several provinces of the Romans Empire primarily Gentile (1 Peter 1:18, 2:10) but not excluding the Jewish by the reference to Diaspora in 1 Peter 1:1. John Calvin captured Peter's aim in writing the letter thus;

to exhort the faithful to a denial of the world and a contempt of it, so that being freed from carnal affections and all earthly hindrances, they might with their whole soul aspire after the celestial kingdom of Christ, that being elevated by hope, supported by patience, and fortified by courage and perseverance, they might overcome all kinds of temptations, and pursue this course and practice throughout life.¹³

This is a call for the believers to stand firm in their faith in the face of horrible persecution by following after the example of Jesus Christ. Peter reminded the Christians of their status as aliens in this world but citizens of heaven. In encouraging the people, he assured them of God's protecting power, which guarantees their absolute security as believers.

Exposition of 1 Peter 1:3-9

In this pericope, Peter presents the theological basis for his encouragement for the readers in the face of persecution. He emphasised throughout this section the grace of God available to believers, which was made possible by God's sovereign calls to salvation. Peter saw this call as believers' source of living hope and the basis for a lifestyle of holiness.

¹³ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistle: The First Epistle of Peter*, John Owen, (trans. and ed.). (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1999: reprinted), 21. Contained in Calvin's Commentaries, Vol. XXII, Hebrews, I Peter, I John, James, II Peter and Jude.

1 Peter 1:3-4

After the initial doxology, Peter moved straight to the heart of his encouragement. He expressed the fact that believers are born again into a new hope beginning with words of praise to God, the father of Jesus Christ, who is the author of salvation and the source of hope. The phrase “in His great mercy” points to God's unmerited favour freely offered to sinners in a hopeless condition. By God's mercy, believers were born a new into a living hope, one that is sure, certain and can never die and is a contrast to the deceptive, empty, false hope the world offers. The words translated “given us new birth” is *anagenneas*; it means “beget again” or “cause to be born again.” This word occurs two times in the New Testament, and both are found in 1 Peter 1:3 and 23. This word implies that believers’ hope is caused by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and as long as the truth remains that Jesus is alive, Christian have full assurance.

Peter defined the living hope in verse 4 with an inheritance that is guaranteed "an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade (permanent)-- kept in heaven"(v. 4). In describing the nature of Christian inheritance, Peter used three adjectives: imperishable, undefiled and unfading. Imperishable means “freedom from the possibility of corruption and decay, undefiled is to be free from uncleanness or moral impurity and unfading is being immune from losing a pristine quality through the wear and tear of time.”¹⁴ This inheritance is reserved for the people of God in heaven. This people of God are those who have received the new birth.

¹⁴ Duane F. Watson and Terrance Callan, *Commentaries on the New Testament: First and Second Peter* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2012), 24.

1 Peter 1:5

In verse 5, Peter affirmed that Christian inheritance is kept (guarded) by the power of God. John MacArthur stated that this statement is rich in the sense that it guarantees the consummation of every believer's eternal salvation.¹⁵ It offers God's promise to believers that until the day when the inheritance that is reserved in Heaven is claimed, God will continue to provide the living hope and the shielding by His power. The reason for the guarding is for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last day.

However, the work of guarding is a function of faith, God's people must have faith and remain faithful for there can be no guarantee of final salvation apart from faith.¹⁶ MacArthur shared the same opinion by expressing that

Continued faith in Christ is the instrument of God's sustaining work. God did not save Christians apart from faith, and He does not keep them apart from faith. Our faith is God's gift, and through His protecting power, He preserves it and nurtures it. The maintenance of a Christian's faith is as much His work as every other aspect of salvation. Faith is kindled and driven and maintained and fortified by God's grace.¹⁷

1 Peter 1:6-7

Having offered some word of encouragement and affirmation, Peter returned to give words of counsel for the people who are undergoing trial and suffering by reasons of their faith. In this verse, Peter counselled his reader to rejoice in their living hope

¹⁵ John F. MacArthur, Jr. "Perseverance of Saints" *The Master's Seminary Journal*, TMSJ 4/1 (spring, 1993), 17.

¹⁶ Scott Mcknight, *1 Peter, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1996), 71.

¹⁷ MacArthur Jr. "Perseverance of Saints,"¹⁸

(both the present and the future) even while they may have to face more trial and temptation. Here Peter was said to have been speaking eschatologically of joy after suffering¹⁸ which agreed with the notion of a living hope.

The word suffers grief (luphqentej) is a reference to the persecution being experienced by believers from their neighbours because of their stand. Duane F. Watson and Terrance Callan identified the diverse nature of the suffering to include “social, religious, political, exclusion from the social life of community and trade guilds and the business opportunities they offer.”¹⁹ However, these trials and temptations were designed to test and strengthen the faith of God's people. For instance, James said, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance” (James 1:2-3). Trials produce joy for the reason that the testing aimed at establishing the faith of believers.

In verse 7 Peter affirmed that value of a tried and tested faith, it is of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire and its result: may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honour when Jesus Christ is revealed. The word dokimazomenou rendered proved genuine, means “to test for the purpose of approving.” Here is an astounding promise. The outcome of proven faith will be praise, glory, and honour at Christ's appearing.

1 Peter 1:8-9

Peter, in these two verses, climaxed the experiential joy that results from a proving and genuine faith. Peter considered that Christians are motivated by their love for the Savior. With this statement, believers are made to understand that what

¹⁸ J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter: World Biblical Commentary*, vol 49 (Waco, Texas: Word Books, publishers, 1988), 29.

¹⁹ Duane F. Watson and Terrance Callan, *Commentaries on the New Testament: First and Second Peter*, 26.

guarantee perseverance on the side of human is love for and faith in Jesus. When believers considered the extent of God's love, they can trust him, and their love for him will help them to persist in the face of persecution without falling away. MacArthur captured the sense of verse 8-9 by submitting that

those who are devoted to Christ long to promote His glory. They long to serve Him with heart and soul and mind and strength. They delight in His beauty. They love to talk about Him, read about Him, fellowship with Him. They desire to know Him better and to know Him deeper. They are compelled in their hearts to want to be like Him. Like Peter, they may stumble frequently and fail in pathetic ways as sinful flesh assaults holy longings. But like Peter, all true believers will persevere until the goal is ultimately reached.²⁰

Theological Affirmation in 1 Peter 1:3-9

In this pericope, Peter made some important theological affirmations. The first affirmation is that God the creator, redeemer, father and judge is the source of believers' hope of eternal security.²¹ The second is that through faith in Christ who is the efficient and mediating cause of salvation, believers are given a new birth, which resulted in a living hope that anticipates a future inheritance. (1 Peter 1:3-5).

The third is that suffering is part of God's redemptive plan and it aimed at proving the genuineness of believers' faith. The life of suffering for believers is an indication that they share in Christ's suffering and if they persevere just as Christ did, they will receive as reward eternal life. William B. Barclay asserted that Peter employed the verb *pascw* to describe believers' suffering and to show in a striking fashion how it connects to

²⁰ MacArthur Jr. "Perseverance of Saints," 20

²¹ Watson and Callan, *Commentaries on the New Testament: First and Second Peter*, 14.

the suffering of Christ.²² Thus, Peter anticipated that the life of suffering of believers should follow the example of Christ. God intended for Christians to follow “the path of Christ that led from suffering to resurrection to heaven and to glorification.”²³ Lastly, Peter affirms the result that accompanied believers’ faith which is the salvation of the soul. The salvation of the soul will lead to an inexpressible and glorious joy at the consummation.

Homiletical Reflection

For the purpose of preaching, the text of 1 Peter 1:3-9 may be outlined thus.

Introduction

The Joy of being a Christian lies in the assurance of salvation. Living with such assurance guarantees a living hope. This passage is one that offers a rich perspective about the hope that we have as Christians even while we may have to suffer in this world. The life of Peter, the writer of this epistle, exemplifies what it is to enjoy a living hope and to persevere in the face of trials. When it appears Peter was going to lose out, Christ interceded in prayers for him. Such intercessory prayer from Christ is what assures that genuine believer will be saved even to the end. However, how do we know that we are secured to the end? This is the question which we are going to find answers to as we consider from this passage the topic: A secured salvation.

²² Barclay, “1 Peter,” in *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament*, 461.

²³ Watson and Callan, *Commentaries on the New Testament: First and Second Peter*, 15.

Body

1. God is the Source of a Secured Salvation (v.3a)

Peter's encouragement speaks directly to believers' heart that if it were not for the mercy of God who through Jesus work snatched sinners from death, there would not have been any reason for a living hope. Obviously, the reason for believers' security, as explained in the text of 1 Peter 1:3-9 is the love of God for humanity. David L. Allen affirmed, "Christ died for the sins of all, because of his and the father's love for all to provide a genuine offer of salvation to all, and his death not only makes salvation possible for all but actually secures the salvation of all who believes by the regenerating and sanctifying works of the Holy Spirit."²⁴ The above statement underscores the role of the Trinity in the salvation of mankind. God, the father, purposed to glorify those who come to him (Rom. 8:30), through Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sin. Charles Hodge succinctly declared "those who are in Christ Jesus are as secure as the love of God, the merit, power, and intercession of Christ can make them. They are hedged around with mercy. They are enclosed in the arms of everlasting love"²⁵

2. Faith is the Access to Secured Salvation (vv. 3b-5)

Those who will experience a secured salvation must experience the new birth and continue to live by faith to the very end. This places emphasis on God's activity in securing eternal life for believers. Though challenges and dangers are eminent and cannot but come, however, believers will remain by the grace of God walking through the narrow path to the end having been kept and guarded by the power of God. Those who have been saved are enabled to stand by Christ constant

²⁴ David L. Allen, *The Extent of Atonement: A Historical and Critical Review* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Academic, 2016), 791.

²⁵ Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William and Eerdmans Publishers, 1983), 287.

advocacy (John 17: 15-24; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1) and the continuous regenerating, indwelling, and sealing works of the Holy Spirit. Meanwhile, this requires the cooperation of believers, a continued trust in God's enabling ability. Charles C. Ryrie expressed this clearly in his view on the extent of atonement that "the atonement of Christ paid for the sins of the whole world, but the individual must appropriate that payment through faith."²⁶

3. Suffering is the Prove of a Secured Salvation (v. 6-7)

Suffering is part of God's design for the eternal security of believers. It is a test of believers' perseverance and those who will persevere to the end are strengthened by the testing of their faith. The desire to persevere in the life of the believers is motivated by their love for the saviour. Believers' love for God keeps them in perpetual relationship with God, thus making the keeping of God's commandment possible (John 14: 21-24). While Christians have no input in salvation, the doctrine of eternal security place responsibility on human - enduring in the face of persecution. Believers' love for God ensured that those who have been elected unto salvation become active and conscious and remain committed to the faith by walking daily with God. For instance Peter mentioned that even when his audience has not seen Jesus, they believed in Him. This is an indication that the people are ready to persevere in the face of their challenges because they loved to see Jesus one day. Therefore, "any doctrine of eternal security that leaves out perseverance distorts the doctrine of salvation itself."²⁷

4. Total Salvation is the Reward of a Secured Salvation (v. 8-9)

For Peter, the end goal of a new birth is total salvation, which will be fully realized at the return of Christ Jesus. At His

²⁶ Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1982), 323.

²⁷ MacArthur, "Perseverance of Saints," 14.

return, there will be judgment and individual who have kept their faith by remaining truth to the end will be rewarded with the salvation of their souls. The implication of this is that believers cannot do whatever he or she likes after accepting Jesus. There is nowhere the Scripture made such allusion. In the subsequent section (1 Peter 1: 13-25), Peter emphasised the need for believers to live a holy life. Richard Alderson identified the relationship between God purpose in Salvation and holiness in this statement:

God elected us for this very purpose. “He chose us in him [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight” (Eph. 1:4). We were predestinated to be conformed to the image of Christ in all His spotless purity (*Rom. 8:29*). This divine choice makes it certain that we shall be like Him when He appears (*I John 3:2*). From this fact, John deduces that everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself just as Christ is pure (*I John 3:3*). His use of the word “everyone” makes it quite certain that those who do not purify themselves will not see Christ, nor be like Him. By their lack of holiness, they prove that they were not so predestinated.²⁸

This assertion is equally grounded in the words of the writer of Hebrews in Hebrews 12:14, “Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness, no one will see the Lord.” Therefore, to think of heaven without emphasizing the issue of holiness is to ignore the whole essence of salvation.²⁹

Also, by the nature of salvation by grace, the result of new birth, severe consequences in case of drifting away and the

²⁸ Richard Alderson, *No Holiness, No Heaven!* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1986),

88.

²⁹ Macarthur, “Perseverance of Saints,” 14.

possibility of losing rewards (Heb. 6:1-12), the Bible commands believers to be true to their profession. Titus challenged believers to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passion and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope – the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ (Titus 2: 11-12). In Romans 6:1-14, Paul called the Christians to live a new life. The new birth produces a new person having a new perspective and orientation (2 Cor. 5:17). It results in a new relationship with God furnished with a renewed capacity to comprehend spiritual things (Rom. 7:7-24). These are the responsibilities of believers. Frederick Dale Bruner asserted that it is a theological misunderstanding when the eternal security of believers, a doctrine taught impressively in scripture, if used to teach believers there is no responsibility.³⁰

We are not in the race of life to lose. God, the Father, has given us new birth into a living hope. This living hope guarantees our inheritance, which is imperishable, undefiled, unfading, and preserved in heaven. Not only this, a secured salvation is assured by the guarding power of God which enables us to face sufferings with high confidence and having been approved we will also be rewarded with the salvation of our souls when Christ returns.

³⁰ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary* Vol.2. The Church Book Matt13-28 (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990), 661.

Conclusion

Peter's pastoral exhortation must be correctly understood and interpreted. Peter's word is an urgent appeal for believers to persevere in faith so that they might be presented holy, blameless, and irreproachable before God in the Day of Judgment. This passage is an exhortation which serves to assure believers who are going through a difficult time because of their faith in Jesus Christ. The text also indicates that warnings are means which God employs in believers' life to accomplish His purpose. Therefore, it is essential to understand that the biblical doctrine of eternal security does not mean that people who accept Christ can live anyhow without. Conversely, when properly understood and applied, eternal security is a powerful and significant Christian doctrine that encourages hope amidst sufferance, provides comfort, challenge believers to be live responsibly and assure them of reward.

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