

Can You Love God and Reject Eternal Security?

I have never run into someone professing Christ who said that they did not love God. Even unbelievers claim to love God. This phrase is so common, it is hard to try and make the point that if someone does not believe in eternal security, then maybe they don't really love God. This question is probably insulting to some, but I ask for some patience to explain what I mean. We can comfortably say that God desires love from those He created. After all, what is the point of creating us with free will if God is not concerned with how we use it? We know that free will is very important to God and He certainly wants us to love and serve Him. I will begin with a familiar passage which will introduce my subject. The story is about a man named Job.

Job 1:1 In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.

Job must have been an exceptional believer for the LORD to have mentioned him before these angelic representatives. The story has been read countless times, but there is yet more to extract. This verse doesn't say that Job loved God, but it is certainly implied. Job was *blameless and upright*. This means that Job lived his life according in such a way that others could not accuse him of wrong doing. He always conducted himself properly before God. Job operated his business with integrity and was honest and trustworthy.

Then it is said of Job that he "*feared God.*" From this statement, we can know that Job was someone who knew and understood God. Knowing the awesome majesty of God, Job understood his place under His authority. Job had an abiding respect for God. He had a reverence that recognized God's presence in all he did. Job was the family Priest and was careful to make sacrifices for his children, who may not have been conscious of the fact that they needed purification. He knew God and His ways and therefore was an example to behold, not just to angels, but to his family and the world.

But then the verse says that He "*shunned evil.*" This phrase tells us what Job's personal thoughts were about evil. He hated it! How did he get to the point of drawing back and departing from evil? He was born in Adam with the sinful nature reigning over him like everyone else. He certainly was not born with this attitude about evil. He learned to hate evil because he loved God. He understood God, knew his righteous standards and as he beheld them, he began to adopt them for himself. Job was not putting on; he was serious about worshipping God, so much that he began to love God's righteous ways. In loving God, you will automatically hate what God hates. This is one of the virtues our Lord had which was noteworthy, "*You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil*

of joy" (Heb 1:9). Job also loved righteousness and hated wickedness. God knew all this about Job and honored him for it, He blessed him tremendously.

Job 1:6-12

6 One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them.

7 The LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

8 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil."

This next phrase takes us into heaven where angels are presenting themselves to God. Satan also appeared with them. The language used suggests that Satan believed that he had his dominion (earth) under control. Perhaps the angels present were rulers over certain areas and were convening with God, but we are not sure. What we do know is that Satan is said to be the ruler of this world. He wrestled that scepter from Adam and since then, he has been running things down here (Matt 4:8, 9; Eph 2:2; 2Cor 4:4). The LORD points out to Satan that he should consider Job. God was pointing out that Satan was not in control of Job. The same language is repeated earlier about Job's character and God lifts Job up as an example that Satan's kingdom was not completely united against God.

9 "Does Job fear God for nothing?" Satan replied.

10 "Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land.

11 But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face."

Satan certainly had considered Job. He knew him very well and was quick to reply that God was protecting Job, "and *his household and everything he has.*" He also knew that God has blessed Job abundantly. Satan was implying by this, that God was buying Job's obedience. Satan was asserting that Job did not really love God, but that Job knew a good thing when he came across it, and would not do anything to lose all the blessing God had given him. Yes, he had considered Job, but he pointed out, "*Does Job fear God for nothing?*" Satan was very smug in his assertions, he was confident that he could defend his turf.

That was really a terrible thing for Satan to say. By saying this, Satan asserts that God is not loveable. He asserts that no one of their own free will would want to love and serve God. He is saying that if Job *really* knew God, he would *not* love Him, but would hate Him. Satan is saying, "You have bought and paid for

Job; you have become his sugar daddy; and don't expect Job to bite the hand that feeds him." God knew that Job really loved Him, but the question stands, how does Satan and all the angels present know that Job really loves God? How do they know that of Job's own free will, he would really prefer God? Satan says, we cannot truly know motive here because God has "*put a hedge around him.*"

Satan is the one who really hates God. He was projecting his own attitude on Job, which was a mistake. In Satan's mind, God is someone with strict rules, someone rigid and vengeful. Certainly God is not someone to love, surmises Satan. He believes this so much that he alleges that if God were to remove the hedge and take away the houses, condos, yachts, expensive cars, and jewelry, "*he will surely curse you to your face.*" He is saying that if God turns off the blessing, we will see the real Job, the one that is simply there for the ride.

One thing we can know from this, Satan cannot read minds. Of all the talents and abilities he has, he does not know what you think. But, before God and all those angels, Satan made an assumption and was pretty confident he was right. He did not say that Job would stop making sacrifices; he did not say that Job would just develop a cold attitude toward God; he did not say that Job would stop worshipping God; he said that Job would openly curse God! Again, this shows Satan's contempt for God. We already know what happens and it is not my objective to tell it all over again. I want to simply look at it from another angle.

12 The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, everything he has is in your hands, but on the man himself do not lay a finger." Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD.

We know the story, Job lost everything. Not only did he lose everything, but the timing of it all was meant to drive Job insane! Just as he was dealing with the catastrophic events in one area, another servant comes with more calamities to tell. Job not only lost possessions, but the lives of his children. I'm sure Satan waited with a devilish grin to see what would come out of Job's mouth. Certainly all the other angels must have been leaning forward to see for themselves if Satan's accusations were actually true, but:

Job 1:20-22

20 At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship

21 and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised."

22 In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.

This still did not silence Satan, for he truly believes that no one, of their own free will, would choose to love God. I can imagine him pacing to and fro, wondering what went wrong. Maybe he never thought God would remove the hedge and he would never have to prove his accusations. We don't know how much time expired between the next angelic meeting. But once they met, Satan was there again, and I bet in a front row seat. He figured it out, now he knows what went wrong. Job is not at all worried about all that stuff, he is really heartless and uncaring and Satan underestimated his love for things. Job doesn't care about those things at all; he is only concerned about himself. He reaffirms his original claim that Job will curse God openly if Job himself, his person, is affected. This will certainly get Job's attention and then we can all see that Job is not genuine.

Job 2:4-5

**4 "Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life.
5 But stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face."**

Well, it was horrible! It was so bad that the scriptures say his friends left their homes to comfort Job, "*When they saw him from a distance, they could hardly recognize him; they began to weep aloud, and they tore their robes and sprinkled dust on their heads*" (Job 2:12). We know that Job stood the test; he maintained his integrity before God, Satan, other angels, his wife and friends. But why are we making a point of this story? I believe that it is a good illustration of what is important in the angelic conflict.

Your motive in serving God is VERY important to God, just as it was with Job. Why are you serving God? Are you serving God because you love and respect Him? The whole story of Job unfolds because of Satan's question, "*Does Job fear God for nothing?*" God allowed Job to be tested and we know the rest of the story. In our service to God, our motive is also VERY important. This story allows us to see some of what is behind the curtain, we can learn something of the conflict that rages between God and his elect angels, and Satan and the fallen angels. I believe the story of Job deals with motive. I also believe that our attitude toward eternal security may expose our motives toward God as well.

Eternal Security

Eternal security is a doctrine that has been maligned and criticized as if there was no such thing in the Bible. Eternal security is a matter of salvation. If salvation is by grace, then eternal security is of necessity by grace. The entire process of salvation, from our lost state in Adam, to standing in our glorified resurrection body before God in eternity is by grace. We are not saved by grace and then kept saved by our faithfulness. If we were saved by our faithfulness to

God, that is something we do and depends on us, but it is clear that salvation is “*no from yourselves.*” *Faith* is non-meritorious and depends on an object, Jesus Christ. *Faithfulness* speaks of us being consistent and dependable before God as believers. Certainly we should be faithful as believers but it is not a matter of salvation. If faithfulness were a condition for salvation, who would qualify? Only one man has ever qualified, and that man is Jesus Christ.

If you do not believe that salvation is a gift, then you are working for your salvation. How So? You may believe that your obedience, your works, your efforts, your faithfulness somehow will move the hand of God and contribute to your salvation in the end. You may believe that in the end when you stand before God’s judgment, if you were not obedient, if you were sinful to some degree, God will ultimately not save you. You may not say it exactly this way, but isn’t the result the same? You may believe that if someone was saved, then ultimately lost, it is because they did not follow God’s will in their lifetime, not whether or not they believed in Jesus Christ. You may believe they may have sinned grievously, so much, that God will never save them, no matter what they once believed. What matters in your view is that they remain faithful. The facts are that your obedience or faithfulness to God is not a matter of salvation. You are not even qualified to be obedient until you are eternally saved (Col 1:12).

Let’s look at this in just a little more detail. If the question of your being saved or lost is not answered with absolute certainty, you need to ask yourself why? Right now, if the matter of salvation is not settled forever, that means you are in danger of hell’s fire. If you have believed in Christ, but still feel that your salvation can possibly be lost, what could possibly move you to absolute assurance? What would God have to do or say to assure you that you are eternally saved? Some are very careful to say that salvation is by grace, since this is exactly what the Bible says. But by their denial of eternal security, their motives are suspect. They believe that ultimately only good people will be saved and all bad people will be lost. The scripture does not support this, but it is the most logical point of view, humanly speaking.

In order to have the proper motive in serving God, you must believe that you are saved by grace and *know* you are forever secure. You must believe that your salvation is “*not by works; not of yourselves, not by works done in righteousness,*” just as the scripture declares. You must believe that your entire salvation has nothing to do with your works, your obedience or behavior. Therefore, once you have it, you are permanently saved. You must believe that your salvation does not depend on your faithfulness to any commands, or on any supposed promises or commitments to God. You do not strike a deal with God for salvation, promising that you will do thus and so and that He will give you salvation in the end.

The result of believing that once you are saved, you will definitely spend eternity with God is that you are now free to express your true desires toward God. Service to God is voluntary, not compulsory. If it is coerced or secured by any other means than that of your own free will, then you have a false motive. If the matter of your soul salvation is still an issue for you, then you should first deal with that issue before you go another step. In other words, if you think your salvation can be lost for any reason, then you had better spend *all* your time making sure you are not lost.

The Importance of Love

Matt 22:36-37

36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

37 Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'

Love must be grown in the soil of freedom. God has the power to force us to love him, but what would that accomplish? I could write a computer program to say "I love Doug" every five minutes, but what does that prove? I believe that God does want us to love Him. He cannot expect us to love Him if He is holding us captives and threatening us with hell's fire. What kind of relationship would it be if God were to tell us, "if you don't do what I want you to do, then I'll cast you into the lake of fire, forever." As important as love is, it must come from a willing heart. It must not be something programmed in, but must come from a will that knows it has the choice of whether or not to love, otherwise, this love could prove to be nothing more than fear of judgment.

Jesus said it best, "*If you love me, you will obey what I command*" (John 14:15). He is not saying, if you love Him, then obey Him. Jesus is saying that obedience is a natural response to love. If you love him, you will naturally obey Him. This was true for Jesus himself, "*but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me*" (John 14:31a). Truly, our motive for serving God should be that we love Him and our greatest heart's desire is we want to do what pleases Him.

Love Must be Voluntary

To illustrate, if you are employed right now, you will probably *not* say that you love your supervisor. You are not working because you love your boss; you are working to get paid! We work for a wage and love is not an issue. Now, no matter how devoted, how diligent you work under your supervisor, it cannot be said that you love them as long as you are receiving a wage for service. A Christian does not serve God because he hopes to be saved someday. A Christian is already saved and serves his Father because he loves Him and chooses to do

what is pleasing in his Father's sight. What is the difference? Motivation! We saw earlier that God is not only concerned with our obedience, but *why* we obey. If we obey for the wrong reasons, then it is not acceptable to God. That would be doing a right thing in a wrong way. With God, a right thing *must* be done in a right way.

If you feel that your salvation can possibly be lost for ANY reason, then *that* reason will affect the motive for your obedience or faithfulness. God does not want us to obey Him because we might be thrown into the lake of fire. We are not obedient to be saved; we are obedient *because* we are already eternally saved. You might say, "I don't believe I obey out of fear, I obey out of love." But in reality, you cannot tell me, that somewhere in your thinking, you know that if you don't obey, there will be consequences, and eternal consequences at that. That has to weigh on you, knowing that God may reject you after all; knowing that maybe you may not live up to all that you say; knowing that you are tempted and you give in to sin. The only alternative to eternal security is insecurity. This insecurity will produce works of service, but not from the motivation of a willing and loving heart, but out of fear of judgment or to gain salvation.

Now back to love for a minute. If you say you love God, and you want to be obedient to Him, you must adhere to His plan of salvation. If you would have asked Saul (Paul) if he loved God, he would have answered, YES! He would have said he was demonstrating his love by upholding God's truth and persecuting the Church. But, Saul really did not love God, in fact, Saul was lost, spiritually dead, and did not even know God. After Saul was saved, he knew that his salvation was not based on "*deeds done in righteousness*" (Titus 3:5). If we love God, we will love His perfect plan of salvation. If after salvation, you come to know and love God, then that is the most natural thing, for to know Him is to love Him.

Satan accused God of buying Job's obedience. Satan said that it was because God blessed and protected Job, that he worshipped and served God. God wanted to let all know that Job's motives for serving Him were indeed genuine, and Job's obedience was not coerced in any way. Satan said the God was acting as Job's sugar daddy. His accusation goes deeper than that! He is saying that no one of their own free will would really want to worship and serve God. Well, Satan was wrong! Job proved it, and so have I. I believe without a doubt that I am saved eternally, right now. I have eternal life and will "*never perish*" just as the Bible says. I know I am going to heaven, I'm sure of that! None of this depends on me or anything I have done or will do. If I do not serve and worship God another day, I will not lose my salvation. But guess what? I love God! It is totally my choice to obey Him or not, and I choose to love Him and be obedient to His word. Just like the scripture says:

For the grace of God which brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously in this present world, looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our Great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Titus 2:11, 12

We Must Settle a Fallacy

Christians who reject eternal security do not have more circumspect lives than those who believe the doctrine. Of course, this belief is based on my own personal experience. If someone believes that salvation can be lost, it doesn't seem to help them live more holy lives. You would think that they would be scared strait, but this is not the case. As I stated earlier, if you think your salvation can be lost for any reason, then you had better spend all your time making *sure* you are not lost. Therefore, believing that salvation can be lost is not a deterrent to sin; just as believing in eternal security does not promote sin. The best solution to overcoming sin is by depending on the provisions God has given. The Holy Spirit indwells us to make our body a temple. We have the filling of the Spirit to compel us to do God's will. Further we have the Word, which can transform our thinking so that with all this, we can "*walk even as he walked.*"

In concluding this discourse, please look one more time at the following verses:

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-- how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died-- more than that, who was raised to life-- is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?

*As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." **No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.** For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor 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.*

Rom 8:31-39

We are *more than conquerors!* But how? Are we more than conquerors because of our faithfulness? No. Only "*through him who loved us.*"

In Christ, Doug...

7/2/02