THE IMPLICATIONS

of the Eternal in Eternal Life

An interesting but ludicrous argument made by supporters of the '*Once Saved Always Saved*' heresy is that *eternal life,* if it can be lost, ceases to be '*eternal*'. They blindly warn, '*Beware of those teaching eternal life is not eternal. These people call God a liar by changing the very definition of the word eternal to temporary'*. Hence, the *OSAS* proponents assert that '*eternal life*' cannot be lost, or better yet forfeited, as this would violate the very definition of *eternal.* It's not uncommon to hear them pose questions like...

'*What is your definition of the words eternal and everlasting?'*

This *OSAS* argument is essentially philosophical and is a straw-man fallacy because no one is actually claiming that *eternal life* is not *eternal.* We who dispute *OSAS* are not calling into question the attributes of the *divine life* given, only man's reception of that gift. As we will demonstrate, at a casual glance this argument may seem valid but is discernibly unscriptural, grossly mistaken, and embarrassingly self-conflicting at the core.

First, let's look at the definition of *eternal*...

According to *Strong's Hebrew* & *Greek Dictionary* the *Greek* word, αἰώνιος, which is translated into both the *English* words '*eternal*' and '*everlasting'* throughout the *New Testament*, is defined as: *That which always has been and always will be, without beginning, without end, never to cease*.[1]

Likewise, *Webster's 1828 Dictionary* defines '*eternal*' as: *Without beginning or end of existence; everlasting and endless. Perpetual, ceaseless, continued without intermission.*[2]

The basis for the *OSAS* argument is fundamentally rooted in the intrinsic attributes of *eternal life*. Since *eternal* means '*without end and never ceasing*' they reason that *New Testament salvation* cannot be interrupted or forfeited because this would violate the definition of *eternal.* As we shall point out, aside from the fact that the overall argument is grossly flawed, they also fail to understand the self-conflicting nature of their theory. Using the same reasoning based on the definition of *eternal life*, they must be consistent also acknowledging that *eternal* means '*without beginning*'. Do believers, who have *eternal life,* possess it perpetually, without a beginning? It's obvious, the *Christian* experience proves otherwise. All *Christians* enjoy *eternal life* by a conditional union with *Christ* via the *Gospel.* Everyone who is *born-again* can remember a starting point, a beginning place of faith in *Jesus Christ*. A specific point in time when they repented, were forgiven, and were translated from the *kingdom of darkness* into the *kingdom of light.* A moment when they were *born-*

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[1] *Strong's* Hebrew & Greek Dictionary.
[2] *Webster's* 1828 Dictionary.

again. Therefore, according to the faulty *OSAS* argument, if *eternal life* ceases to be *eternal* merely because someone forfeits it, it also ceases to be *eternal* if a man has a *beginning point* in his *salvation,* which we know is irrefutably false. This internal conflict in the application of their argument exposes it as misguided and fallacious. This is namely because they mistake their conditional union with *Jesus* who is *eternal* with *eternal life* itself. Allow me to explain.

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."
—Romans 6:23

Through the atoning work of *Christ*, who is our *life* (*Jn 1:4, 14:6; Col 3:4*), God offers those who meet the *Gospel* conditions the '*gift'* of *eternal life*. However, nowhere in the *Scriptures* do we read that God gives us an unconditional '*eternally given gift*' of *life*. The attribute of '*eternal'* is *not* a description of how we *receive* the gift, but rather, it describes the nature of the *life* being given. All '*gifts*' directly reflect the power, provision, and resources of the *giver*. It is the *giver* who defines the *gift*, not the *recipient*. It is the *giver* who determines what the *gift* will be, makes provision for it, purchases it, packages it, and presents it. Whether or not such a *gift* is received, rejected, or retained doesn't change the nature of the *gift* or the one who gave it.

God is *eternal* and He remains *eternal* whether we acknowledge Him or not. *God's Word* is *eternal,* and it remains *eternal* regardless if men believe it or not. Likewise, *eternal life* is *eternal* whether we receive it or reject it, whether we meet its conditions or not.

In a practical sense, if I gave you a fishing boat and you decided that you either did not want it or you determined to sell it afterward, that would not alter the nature of the fishing boat. Or perhaps you decided that you didn't want it at all. You could reject the gift outright or return it later, it wouldn't mean the fishing boat ceases to be a fishing boat. Nor does it mean that the quality of the boat has been compromised. It also does not mean you've interfered with my ability to give gifts. It only means you've chosen to no longer have any relation to the fishing boat.

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus..."
—2 Timothy 1:1

Though the human soul is *immortal*, no man is innately *eternal.* On the other hand, *deity*, and *deity* alone, is intrinsically *eternal*. Thus, men only experience '*eternal life*' by virtue of their conditional union with the *Lord Jesus Christ*. The *divine life* in *Christ* is *eternal* and immutably remains so, regardless of what men do or don't do. Therefore, a stand-alone feature of *eternal life* is *eternality*. However, we only benefit or experience that *eternality* by the on-going union with *Christ* by meeting the *Gospel* condition of faith. *Eternal life* is the *life* that issues from the *eternal God*. Since *God* has and always will be *eternal* (*Ps 90:2*), He alone possesses *eternality* (*1 Tim 6:16*), and *life* in Himself (*Jn 5:26*) and has granted the *Son* to likewise possess *life* in Himself (*Jn 5:26*). Since *God* is the source of *eternal life* it follows that one's possession of it is only through a faith relationship with the *eternal God* and His *eternal Son, Jesus Christ*.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself..." —John 5:24-26

Regarding *John 5:24, New Testament* scholar *Henry Alford* comments...

"The *believeth* (πιστεύω, pisteuo), and the *hath* (ἔχω, echo) *everlasting life*, are commensurate: where *faith* is, the possession of *eternal life* is, and when the one remits, the other is forfeited."[3]

Please note that both verbs, *believeth* and *hath*, are in the present tense. In this particular verse, the person who keeps on trusting in *God the Father*, who sent his *Son*, continues to possess *eternal life*. Obviously, he who doesn't, forfeits *life*. The *Apostle John*, under divine inspiration, concisely summed up this truth with these words...

"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." —1 John 5:10-13

If men refuse to abide in *Christ*, they lose their union with Him, and consequently forfeit the accompanying *eternal life* in Him. Nevertheless, unbelief cannot affect *eternal life* itself, it remains *eternal* whether men believe or not. *Adam* was a *Son of God* who possessed *eternal life* because of his union with *God*, yet he forfeited that *life* by *sin*. Nonetheless, the *fall* rendered *Adam* outside of *God* and therefore separated him from *eternal life*, but the *fall* had no effect on *eternal life* itself, because *eternal life* is in *God*.

"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." —John 15:5-6

"But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." —Hebrews 3:13-15

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." —2 John 1:9

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[3] Henry Alford, *The New Testament for English Readers*.

Finally, another glaring fault in this argument is the failure to apply this argument to the condition of the *lost*. All men, at one time or another, are lost in sin (*Rom 3:23*; *1 Jn 5:19*).

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." —John 3:36

Above, *John 3:36b* reads, '*he that believeth not the Son shall not see life...*', is this phrase to be considered absolute, with no other fate possible? I think not. All true *Christians* have *eternal life*, but *unbelievers* are presently under the *judgment of God* (*Jn 3:36*). In the *Scriptures*, this *judgment* is often referred to as *everlasting* and *eternal (Dan 12:2; Matt 24:41, 46, 25:45; 2 Thess 1:9; Heb 6:2)*. Hence, just as *New Testament salvation* is sometimes called '*eternal life*', likewise the potentially temporal condition of the *sinner* is sometimes defined as '*eternal damnation'*. Yet, if we apply the *OSAS* argument to *eternal damnation*, assuming because the word '*eternal*' is used, the sinner's state is unconditionally static and can never be altered, then we must believe sinners cannot be saved. However, we know this is not true. Sinners, by meeting the conditions of *repentance* and *faith* in the *finished work of Christ* can escape *eternal damnation* and enter *eternal life*. Likewise, if believers continue in the conditions that bring salvation, then they will continue in salvation. If not, they will fall again under judgment and face *eternal damnation*.

"Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life." —1 John 2:24

Once-Saved-Always-Saved is a dark, evil, Bible-twisting *doctrine of devils* and it has caused many a weary pilgrim to go astray. Dear reader, I urge you to flee the *Antinomian leaven* and hide thyself firmly in *Christ* and His *Word*.

—B.W.

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