

ETERNAL SECURITY (23)

QUESTION #10 – How does the word “never” prove the doctrine of eternal security?

There is an English word that we use to express the emphatic meaning - “not at any time” or “not on any occasion.” It is the word never. For example, if we say “he will never be paroled” we mean there is no way at any time that this person will ever get out of prison. If we say “he will never pass the course,” what we mean is that he has reached a point in which it is impossible for him to get a passing grade. If we say “he never saw it coming,” what we mean is at no time did he see or suspect what was about to happen. The word “never” is the strongest possible form of negation in the English language.

We say, sometimes loosely, that we believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible. What that actually means is that we believe the Bible is equally inspired (plenary) right to the very word (verbal). What this means is we believe the Bible is inspired right to the chosen word “never.” When this word “never” shows up in the Bible, it was God who put it there and it is God who wants to communicate a point.

In the Greek language, there are primarily two words used to negate something: “ouk” or “ou” (οὐκ, οὐ) which is used to deny the reality of an alleged definite fact, and “may” (μή) which is used to deny something indefinite.

Dr. A. T. Robertson gives a good illustration between “ou” and “may.” If a young man decides to propose to a lady and she answers him in Greek with the word “may,” she is saying “no” but is uncertain as to whether she means “no.” She may desire to be coaxed a little more. If on the other hand, the lady answers “ou,” she is definitely saying “no,” and in this case, there is no chance of her changing her mind at the present time. There is, however, a third way the woman could respond and that would be to combine two Greek negatives together, “ou may.” The meaning in this case would be, “I will not marry you and there is no chance of me ever changing my mind and ever marrying you.” In other words, she is saying “I will never marry you.”

When the two negatives (ou and may) are combined together, the prohibition or the negation is as emphatic as can be expressed in language. Dana & Mantey write: “...this doubling of the negatives we can now say unreservedly that the negatives were doubled for the purpose of stating denials or prohibitions emphatically” (H. E. Dana & Julius R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, pp. 263-267).

In other words, the strongest way in Greek to emphatically intensify the possibility of something not happening was to combine these two words together, “ou may.” These two words mean something will “**never**” occur and there is no possibility of it ever happening. **When combined, these two words make something impossible.** The combination of these two words being used to make something impossible occurs some 94 times in the Greek N.T. Sometimes it is simply translated in English “not” and “no” and sometimes it is translated in English “never” (W. F. Moulton, A. S. Geden, H. K. Moulton, *Concordance to the Greek Testament*, pp. 646-647).

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Regardless of how the English translators translate the word, the meaning, when used, is the most **emphatic denial** and negation of reality and possibility. When the two words are combined in composition, one may understand it to mean that this is never going to happen and there is no possibility of it ever happening. In the study of the doctrine of eternal security, this combination (ou may) of words is very important. There are several passages (we will specifically look at ten) which deal with the subject of salvation and security. These passages have been inspired by God and they clearly lead us to conclude that the loss of salvation is an absolute impossibility.

(Passage #1) - John 4:14

The statement of Jesus Christ is that “whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall **never** (ou may) thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to **eternal life**.” From this verse we make three critical observations:

- 1) The verb “drinks” is aorist, indicating a one point-in-time moment.
- 2) The word “never” is “ou may” meaning there is never any possibility of one who drinks once thirsting for life again.
- 3) The promise to one who does drink once is that he will have eternal life.

This one verse clearly promotes the doctrine of eternal security and clearly establishes the impossibility of losing one’s salvation once one has believed on Jesus Christ (**John 6:40**). The point of the verse is if you take Jesus Christ into your life by faith one time, you have eternal life and there is **never** a possibility of you thirsting for eternal life again.

(Passage #2) - John 6:35-37

In these three verses, Jesus Christ uses “ou may” three times to state that if one comes to Him by faith he will: **1) Never hunger**; **2) Never thirst**; **3) Never be cast out**. Three impossibilities are stated by Jesus Christ:

- 1) It is impossible for one who believes on Christ to ever hunger for life again.
- 2) It is impossible for one who believes on Christ to ever thirst for life again.
- 3) It is impossible for one who has been brought to the Son by the Father to ever be cast out.

The clear point is that one who has believed on Jesus Christ is completely secure because certain things are no longer a possibility. In fact, it is explicitly stated that the will of the Father is to give eternal life to those He brought to the Son (**John 6:39-40**). William Van Doren, an esteemed Bible expositor and grammarian of the 1800s, said of this negation: “Greek words express double exclusion” which means “for no reason or account” (*Gospel of John*, p. 563). In other words, one may not be cast out because of any reason.

We must always remember what Christ did to guarantee the promise of “never.” He came and He died and He arose which is concrete proof that when we trust Him, we cannot ever hunger again, we cannot ever thirst again, and we cannot ever be cast out of our relationship with Him. Our eternal security is not based on our faithfulness; it is based on the work of Jesus Christ. It is totally and completely His Word that makes the “ou may” promises possible, or better - impossible.

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(Passage #3) - John 10:28

In this verse, the statement of Jesus Christ is that the one to whom He gives eternal life - “shall **never** (ou may) perish.” Dr. S. L. Johnson, former professor of theology at Dallas Theological Seminary, writes concerning this verse: “First take a careful look at the term “eternal life.” Jesus does not say, “I give unto them six months life,” nor “five years life” nor “eternal life until one sins.” The life He gives is “eternal.” If it can be lost, it is not eternal life that believers receive. And second, in order to emphasize the point, our Lord adds, “and they shall never perish.” The construction in the original text is the strongest way that one can express emphatic negation. In fact, it would not be wrong to render the clause, *and they shall by no means ever perish.*” ...Spurgeon has a telling word here, ‘See, then, Christian, you may be deprived of a thousand things without any violation of the promise. The promise is not that the ship shall not go to the bottom, but that the passengers shall get to the shore. The promise is not that the house shall not be burned; but the pledge is that you who are in the house shall escape. They never perish’” (S. L. Johnson, *Once Saved, Always Saved*, p. 5).

In this one verse, Jesus Christ clearly states that when He gives eternal life to someone they shall **never** perish. In Christ’s mind, the concept of having eternal life is equated with the concept of never perishing. Thus one who has eternal life **is** eternally secure. A person cannot be one who potentially may perish and be one who possesses eternal life. For if one possesses eternal life, he cannot ever perish.

Willard Aldrich observed: “The Greek negative employed in this passage is a combination of two negative (“ou” and “may”) thus forming the strongest possible statement ‘they shall **never** perish.’ This leaves no room for the supposition that one having eternal life ‘could’ give it back” (Willard Aldrich, *Is Salvation Probationary*, Bibliotheca Sacra, p. 95).

For one who is saved, there is never the possibility of that one perishing or not being saved. This is precisely the point of Jesus Christ.

(Passage #4) - John 11:26

Here is another **never** promise of our Lord. The promise is that one who believes in Him “shall **NEVER** (ou may) die.” The point of eternal security is further strengthened if we realize that Jesus Christ is saying this in the context of the death of Lazarus (**11:14**), and He is saying this to Martha, one of Lazarus’ sisters (**11:21**). Although, in this context, Christ intended to literally raise Lazarus to show that life is found in Him, this discussion occurs in the context of one who has just physically died.

The Apostle Paul makes it clear that no one lives for himself or dies for himself (**Romans 14:7**). In other words, both life and death are ordained by God and the destiny of one’s eternity is in His hands. The **one** and **only** issue that determines whether one who dies physically has eternal life or eternal damnation, sometimes referred to as eternal death, is the issue of believing on Jesus Christ (**John 3:16; 5:24; 6:40, 47**). Now the point of this verse (**11:26**) is that once one has

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believed on Jesus Christ, it is impossible for him to suffer eternal death. There is **never** (ou may) the possibility of one who has believed on Christ to eternally perish. Christ's question to Martha is one that needs to be asked of everyone, "Do you believe this (**11:26b**)? In this case, the physical proof of this eternal reality is the resurrection of Lazarus (**11:43-44**). When Christ gives eternal life to a person, he shall **never** die!

(Passage #5) - Romans 4:8

Here is a remarkable text concerning salvation. It speaks of a man who is in a blessed state because God will **never** (ou may) take sin into account. The Greek text may literally be translated this way: "Blessed is a man who **NEVER** the Lord will calculate sin." (My own translation of the Greek text - μακάριος ανήρ οὔ [οὐ μή] λογισθήϊαι κύριος αμαρτίαν.)

The verb "take into account" (NASV) is one that means to judicially calculate, count, or reckon. It speaks of a judicial decree in which one, in this context, **never** has his sin calculated against him in a condemnatory way (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 270).

Naturally, one who stands in a relationship with God in such a way that God will **never** calculate his sin against him, is a blessed man. The critical question then is this - "How does one get into this state of blessedness in which a man never must worry about God calculating sin against him in a condemnatory way?"

In the context of **Romans 4** (NASV), this word "take into account" or "calculate" is used in **verse 3** - "reckoned," **verse 5** - "reckoned," **verse 6** - "reckoned," and **verse 8** - "take into account." It is clear from this context that the specific point is that this judicial calculation **does not** come by works, but by faith in Jesus Christ (**4:2, 3, 5, 6**). When one believes on Jesus Christ by faith, apart from any works, his lawless deeds are forgiven, his sins are gone and he **never** needs to worry about the condemnatory wrath of God (**Romans 4:7-8, 24**).

In very plain legal, inspired language, God states that it is possible for one to be in a relationship with Him in which it is impossible for God to calculate sin against him. This privileged relationship cannot be entered into by works, even the works of a man like Abraham, but may only be entered into by faith in Jesus Christ. In other words, once a person believes on Jesus Christ, he is judicially declared righteous by God forever (justification) and the Lord will **never** calculate his sin against him and condemn him. One who has placed his faith in Christ is in a blessed state and he is eternally secure.

(Passage #6) - Hebrews 10:17

Here is a verse that states that it is possible for one to be in a relationship with God in such a way that God will **never** remember sins and lawless deeds. The words "no more" are "ou may," meaning "**never**" or "**no not ever**."