

International Journal of Multidisciplinary and Current Educational Research (IJMCER)

ISSN: 2581-7027 ||Volume|| 7 ||Issue|| 1 ||Pages 240-245||2025||

Analysis of Ephesians 1:13-14 Regarding the Concept of Salvation That Cannot Be Lost and Its Relationship to Human Responsibility

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ABSTRACT: There are several teachings in Christianity which teach that salvation can be lost, so that God's perfect grace must also depend on the behavior of human life. Because it seems that truth and salvation are relative. This casts doubt on the Christian faith and makes the gift of salvation cheap and meaningless. This research is to provide an answer to the assumption that salvation can be lost depending on how human responsibility responds to God's gift of salvation. This research uses a subjective strategy with a topical examination approach and analyzes the content of Ephesians 1:13-14 as its premise, as well as considering various different views on the doctrine of salvation. This research concludes that eternal salvation occurs when a person accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior in his life. Even though the gift of salvation is one way from God, there is still a human responsibility in carrying out that salvation. Eternal salvation provides certainty, affirmation, and concern for God so as to avoid punishment and obtain eternal life

KEYWORDS: Salvation, Ephesians, Responsibility

I. INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of salvation in Christianity is the perfect work established by God in eternity, done by Jesus Christ on the cross and guaranteed by the Holy Spirit who becomes the seal for believers. Arifianto writes: "The Holy Spirit leads to the whole truth of God, so that the person whom he leads is spared from the tactics of deception." The concept of the phrase 'salvation cannot be lost' or once saved remains saved" is a formulation or extension of the meaning of the Confession of the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints formulated at the Synod of Dort in the Netherlands which is often also the guiding faith of most Reformed Churches. Basically, it is a confession that God will keep believers safe in all circumstances and for eternity. God will comfort believers and keep believers safe. Believers do not have to do anything to be saved and receive eternal life. God, in his faithfulness, will empower believers to persevere in faith. There are many questions about whether one can ever be sure of his or her salvation. The churches in the Netherlands are in turmoil with regard to these issues.²

The message of salvation and the complete act of redemption come from God. Whenever believers become true Christians, God will keep them in His hands. God's grace does not imply that believers do not have any responsibilities. The believer has many responsibilities to be close to God, to follow God, to submit himself more and more to God, to be in God's presence, to seek God's face, to live righteously "Coram Deo". Three important aspects: First, God is the Savior and He gives full assurance to believers of faith. Secondly, this only comes from the grace of God. This doctrine formulated at the Synod of Dort believes that believers have a great responsibility, but the perseverance of faith comes from God. Thirdly, God Himself will empower believers to endure to the end. The confession of the perseverance of the saints emphasizes that whatever may befall them in the periodicity of life, God will not reject true believers. Through research and review of existing literature, this paper provides a rebuttal to the view that rejects salvation as entirely the work of God's grace through the seal of the Holy Spirit. As Baker writes: "There are those who think that since God created all things, he must be responsible for everything that happens, and therefore for the sake of justice God owes it to his creatures to save them." This centers the idea that salvation is God's responsibility alone for creation, not man's. The fact is that man is not worthy of salvation.

¹ Yonatan Alex Arifianto and Asih Rachmani Endang Sumiwi, "The Role of the Holy Spirit in Guiding Believers to the Whole Truth Based on John 16:13," Diegesis: Journal of Charismatic Theology 3, no. 1 (2020): 1-12.

² Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology, Ontario: Devoted Publishing, 2017. p 205-206

³ Charles Baker, A Dispensational Theology (Jakarta: Anugerah Bible Library, 2009), 366

Whereas these humans do not deserve salvation, but rather deserve God's judgment. The purpose of this study is to provide a rebuttal to the view that salvation can be lost, provide security for the believer's belief in God's eternal salvation, and present the truth in Ephesians 1:13-14 biblically as the basis for the Christian view of the assurance of eternal salvation.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses qualitative research with a thematic analysis approach to get the right conclusion. Thematic research is a focus in text research. Thematic analysis has an appeal because the Old Testament narrative talks about many things. Any grain in the Old Testament can be the focus of a thematic approach. In the New Testament there is certainly something interesting that relates to one of Paul's epistles or letters that deals with the theme of the Sealing of the Holy Spirit. The author explains the work of salvation discussed by Paul in Ephesians 1:13-14. The most dominant form of thematic analysis is traditional systematic theology. Older confessions and catechisms often use Old and New Testament sources as proof-texts in defining and supporting doctrinal beliefs, as well as in analyzing and synthesizing what Paul says about the sealing of the Holy Spirit. For example, what are the teachings on salvation and the sealing of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14). This study uses literal, grammatical, contextual and theological interpretation.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Perseverance of the Saints in the Synod of Dort

The Synod of Dort (Reformed Church in America 1991) explains clearly: Article 3: God's providence over the penitent: Because of the remnants of sin that remain in them and also because of the temptations of the world and Satan, those who have been converted could not remain in this Grace if left to themselves. But the Lord is faithful, mercifully strengthening them in the grace once given to them and firmly keeping them in it to the end.

Chapter 9: The assurance of this preservation: Concerning the preservation of those elected to salvation and concerning the perseverance of those who truly believe in faith, the believers themselves can be and are truly assured according to the measure of their faith. With this faith they firmly believe that they are and always will be members of the true and living church, and that they have forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Article 14: God uses the means in perseverance: And, as it has pleased the Lord to begin this work of grace in us by the preaching of the gospel, so the Lord maintains, continues, and completes this work by hearing and reading the gospel, by meditating on it, by its exhortations, threats, and promises, and also by the use of the sacraments.

Article 6: Rejection of false accusations: That the teaching of the Reformed churches on predestination and on points connected with it by its nature and tendency turn the minds of the people away from all piety and religion, is the opiate of the flesh and of the devil, and is the stronghold in which Satan waits for all men, wounding most of them, and fatally piercing many of them with the arrows of despair and self-confidence." John MacArthur also agrees: "All true believers will be fully saved. Christ's high-priestly ministry guarantees it. They have been justified, they are sanctified, and they will be glorified. Not one of them will be left behind in any stage of the process, although in this life they all find themselves at different points along the way." This means that God will save and preserve the saints through His gracious grace in Christ. In this case.

According to Louis Berkhof, Luther and Calvin both regarded God's work of regenerating sinners as instantaneous and finished. Therefore, the believer can be absolutely certain of his salvation in Christ. The future of total acceptance by God is assured."8

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⁴ Richard L Pratt Jr, *He Gave Us His Story: A Bible Student's Guide to Interpreting Old Testament Narratives* (Surabaya: Momentum Publishers, 2005), 101.

⁵ Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 5.

⁶ Reformed Church in America, 2018, *Canons of Dort*, viewed November 29, 2018, from https://www.rca.org/resources/canons-dort.

⁷ John MacArthur, 1993, 'Perseverance of the saints', The Master's Seminary Journal 4(1), 5-24, November 29, 2018

⁸ Louis Berkhof, *The history of Christian doctrines*, Banner of Truth, Edinburgh. 1978

John Calvin in his masterpiece 'Institutes of Christian Religion' (Institutio 3: XXI) places great emphasis on God's free election as the basis for the believer's perseverance. Calvin also believed that only the faithful in Christ can be saved. Union with Christ results in regeneration and justification. This confession rejects the views of Arminius. To do justice to Arminius' views, it must be recognized that he wanted to fully accept human responsibility without rejecting God's way of salvation. He therefore wanted to explain that God, in His glory, accepts human reason. 10 However, it must be stated that God's grace is completely undeserved. God's preservation of believers is not at all worthy. It cannot be rejected or lost. It is not the believer's faith or foreseen faith that saves and preserves, but God's total grace.

Of course in this formulation of the Synod of Dort what is most emphasized is the "free" Grace of God to every person of his choice. Berkouwer gives much attention to the relationship of faith and perseverance of the elect. In the midst of life's uncertainties and the reality of human inability, it is difficult to hold on to the faithful's profession of perseverance. However, Berkouwer explains that the perseverance of the saints is clearly linked to the certainty of faith. The existential tension becomes clear when there is a reference to Paul who also explains in 1 Corinthians 10:12 that those who think they are standing, may fall. There are many references to Israel actually falling into sin. Is the confession of the perseverance of the saints not an escape from the reality of repentance? What should be said is the recognition that God is faithful in the borderline situations of the fragility of human life. Explaining that the confession of perseverance of faith is related to the comfort of the believer. God's grace and faithfulness are the basis for confession and not the acceptance of speculative continuity.¹¹

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS THE GUARANTEE OF SALVATION (EPHESIANS 1:13-14): Believers realize that the state of this body is still in the world and not yet in heavenly eternal life. Therefore salvation, though certain, is still a future perspective. Saragih writes: "Salvation is not a state of attainment or perfection but a state of journey, growing in God, for God and through the power of God." ¹² The Lord's words in Ephesians 1:13 are very clear: "In whom you also, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, when you believed, were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." Although the Holy Spirit is described as the seal, there are some terms used by the apostle Paul that require theologians to give a simple and understandable interpretation, such as the use of the word "you" instead of the word "we" in this verse. To explain, consider verse 6 "...which he gave us in him..." and verse 11 "...in whom we have the promised portion..." The LAI translates the word "us" with the word "we" in verse 6 above because according to Abineno, they (including the LAI) interpret hemas in a broad sense (all Christians) and therefore translate "we." because verse 11 clearly reads: "we who were predestined to receive this portion according to the purpose of God" and in verse 13 it reads: "...because you have heard the word of truth..." Thus, both Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians all have the opportunity to believe. The sealing of the Holy Spirit covers believers in all places, centuries, and times who accept the work of salvation done by Jesus on the cross. The seal is a valid guarantee of the certainty of the believer's salvation. The Greek word εσφραγίσθητε (esprhagisthete) in Ephesians 1:13 is translated: you are marked with a seal or in the TB it is translated: "you are sealed." This signifies the certainty of salvation because the Holy Spirit does the sealing. The Holy Spirit guarantees believers eternal life in heaven. Having eternal life means having eternal salvation. A life or assurance that has an end is a temporary life or assurance. It is possessed until it is fully obtained. Ryrie said: "Sealing involves possession and assures us of the assurance of God's promises to us, especially of our salvation." The word 'esprhagisthete' means 'to seal (to be safe or enclosed), to mark with a seal or certify with a seal, to acknowledge. 517

⁹ John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian religion, transl. F.L. Battles, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, PA. 1960 ¹⁰ Den Boer, Defense or deviation? A re-examination of Arminius's motives to deviate from the 'Mainstream' reformed theology, in A. Goudriaan & F. van Lieburg, Revisiting the Synod of Dort (1618-1619), pp. 23-48, Brill, Leiden. (Brill's series in church history, 49). 2011

¹¹ Berkouwer, Dogmatische Studiën: Geloof en volharding, Kok, Kampen. 1949

¹² Erman S. Saragih, "Hypergrace Soteriology in the Perspective of Martin Luther's Theology and the Bible," Cultivation Journal of Theology 1, no. 2 (2017): 235-251

¹³ J. L. Ch. Abineno, Bible Commentary: The Letter to the Ephesians (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1989), 30. 14 Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Charles C. Ryrie, Basic Theology, vol. 2 (Yogyakarta: Andi Offset, 2013), 135

¹⁷ Hasan Sutanto, Greek-Indonesian Interlinear New Testament and New Testament Concordance (PBIK), vol. 2 (Jakarta: Indonesian Bible Institute, 2003), 739.

John Stott in this regard also gives a teaching that explains that in ancient times animals and even slaves were stamped with the owner's seal as a sign Of ownership of the animal and slave. But such seals were set on the outside, whereas the seal of God was set on the inside. Baptism is a visible outward sign, whereas God seals His people with the Spirit so that they are known as His own. 18 Sealing by the Holy Spirit according to Ephesians 1:13 occurs if two conditions are met: hearing the Word of truth, the gospel of salvation, and believing. Besides Ephesians 1:13, there are also other Bible verses that reveal implicitly that there are two conditions - hearing and believing - to obtain salvation in Christ Jesus. Those Bible verses are: John 5:24 (hearing and believing), Romans 10:17 (hearing and faith), 2 Timothy 3:15 (knowing and faith), Revelation 3:20 (hearing and opening the door). There must be two conditions for salvation in Christ Jesus because "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17). The word of Christ is synonymous with "the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation" (Eph 1:13). The word πιστεύσαντες (pisteusantes) in Ephesians 1:13 is translated "when believing." The word pisteusantes is from the word πιστεύω (pisteuo) which means "believing has strong faith and is sure to trust." John 1:12 reads: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name." So, those who believe in His name are all those who receive Him. They are empowered to become children of God. The word receive in the Greek text is elabon which is a third person plural imperfect verb in the EDNT written "They received Him." ²⁰

In Ephesians 1:14 it says: "The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance until we have obtained the full redemption that makes us God's own, to the praise of his glory." What exactly is the role of the Triune God in the salvation of man so that salvation is realized? To answer this question, it is necessary to first answer the question: Who is the cause of salvation? The cause of salvation according to Lantang is a discussion of the persons of God who play a role so that salvation is realized, namely: First, God as the eternal planner of all things and the originating cause of salvation (2Tim 1:9); Second, Jesus Christ as the mediator who fulfills all the demands of God and has been carried out on the cross, in exchange for and for those who believe in Him or the meritorious cause (Matt 20:28, 2Cor 5:21, 1Pet 3:18); Third, the Holy Spirit who makes believers born again and live holy. He is the cause or executor so that salvation becomes the believer's personal experience or the efficient cause (John 3:5; Galatians 5:16). The role of the Holy Spirit is not only as the efficient cause of salvation but also as the guarantee of all the rights of His redeemed people to receive all the promises of God on the day of redemption. "The Holy Spirit seals the believer until the day of redemption. If salvation could be lost, then His seal would not be until the day of redemption."²¹ According to the researcher, 'sanctification' can be divided into three periods of time, namely: past sanctification (Gal 3:13, Rom 3:24, Eph 1:7, 1Pet 1:18-19); present sanctification (Tit 2:14); future sanctification (Rom 8:22-23, 1Cor 15:52, Eph 1:14, Phil 3:20-21). The later sanctification is the sanctification that is to come, which is when Christ reveals Himself (cf. 1Jn.3:2-3). In Ephesians 1:14 the Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our portion until we obtain the whole, which is the time of redemption, when Christ reveals Himself.

According to Abineno, the redemption referred to here (Eph 1:14) is the full redemption or eternal salvation that believers will receive. ²²Interpreters do not agree on this expression. Some translate it as "until we obtain redemption," "for the redemption that makes us God's own," "for the redemption that we possess," "for the redemption that controls (the heavenly inheritance)," and "for the redemption that belongs to God." Thus, the Holy Spirit is given to the believer when he believes. This gift is like a "down payment" which means that God gives the Holy Spirit to guarantee that all the rights of believers as His children will be given now here and later in the fulfillment of redemption. God is the planner and original cause of salvation, Jesus Christ is the executor of salvation, and the Holy Spirit is the cause or executor so that salvation becomes the believer's personal experience.

INTERPRETATION OF SALVATION CANNOT BE LOST: Having seen the discussion on the doctrine of salvation, the perseverance of the saints and the analysis in Ephesians 1:13-14, what about the passages in the

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¹⁸ John R. W. Stott, Ephesians: Realizing the New Society in and Through Jesus Christ, trans. Martin B. Dainton and H. A. Oppusunggu (Jakarta: Bina Kasih Communication Foundation, 2003), 43.

¹⁹ Sutanto, Greek-Indonesian Interlinear New Testament and New Testament Concordance (PBIK), vol. 1, pp. 1027.

²⁰ Horst Robert Balz and Schneider Gerhard, eds., Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 337.

²¹ Ryrie, Basic Theology, vol. 2, pp. 95

²² Abineno, Bible Commentary: The Epistle to the Ephesians, 33.

Bible where it seems that faith can be lost and cause rejection by God? These need to be referred to, as they have implications for understanding salvation cannot be lost. An example is the passage in Hebrews 6:4-6 which reads, "For those who were once enlightened in their hearts, and tasted the heavenly gifts, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God and the gifts of the world to come, and yet have fallen away, cannot be renewed again in such a way that they repent, for they crucify the Son of God to themselves and publicly mock him." According to Buchanan, he explains that there is no opportunity for a second repentance, because Christ's sacrifice is one for all. In Israel's law there was a distinction between sins committed 'unwittingly' and 'willfully'. Christ's sacrifice was complete, but those who willfully rejected Christ had no new opportunity. In this sense, the rejection of Christ is complete. ²³ Likewise, according to Bruce, the sin committed that cannot be undone, is willful apostasy where the apostate crucifies the Son of God again. In this case, seeing apostasy as a possibility: These passages also teach that apostasy, willful defection from the true religion, is a real possibility for members of the covenant community (Heb 12:15-16; 3:12; John 15:2, 6). Church members should be warned of this danger and should encourage one another to persevere in faith and holiness (Heb 3:13).24

But on the other hand, it is also clear that not everyone who professes Christ outwardly, really does so out of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, because they have nothing else to offer Him. Some come to Jesus like the seed in the parable of the sower, which grows for a while and then succumbs to all sorts of dangers and persecutions and abandons the faith. Therefore, it is important to say that the perseverance of the saints does not mean that God will only distinguish between true and false believers in the last days. Today, God will also distinguish between those who truly follow him, and those who do not. It is imperative to state that it is God who will keep believers safe. Therefore, the fear of apostasy is abolished. Likewise, if you look at the Bible verse in the Gospel of John 6:35-37, which reads, "Jesus said to them: "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never hunger again, and he who believes in me will never thirst again. But I tell you the truth, even though you have seen me, you have not believed. All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out."

Bruner agrees: Moreover, Jesus apparently believed that his Father would give his Spirit in such measure to those who truly came to Jesus that their hearts would overflow with the assurance of their acceptance, their return, and their reconciliation with the reconciling Father." 25 Hebrews and John do not contradict each other. It describes different positions in the Christian faith. In Hebrews the radical apostasy of those who reject Christ after non-authentic discipleship will no longer be accepted. In John, it is all about the Father's eternal promise of authentic belief. Bruce also emphasizes that the risen Christ and participation in His resurrected life will ensure that believers need not fear the final consummation and final judgment.²

IV. **CONCLUSION**

Confidence in the perseverance of the saints empowers the believer in the most difficult circumstances and he can recognize that God is the One who will keep them safe for time and eternity. That is the meaning of the believer's salvation cannot be lost. A study of Ephesians 1:13-14 provides the answer that the grace of salvation given once by God, will forever remain in the life of the believer. The truth of faith is found in God, not in human possibilities. Challenges to faith on the premise that there is no certainty must be rejected, for it is God who keeps them safe. His truth is different from the world's truth, and his promise is eternal. In this sense, this truth leads the church to serve the triune God fully. There must be a realization of biblical, theocentric, and Christocentric religion.²⁷ The Holy Spirit's sealing of believers occurs when one believes. After sealing, the Holy Spirit works in a believer indefinitely. The sealing of the Holy Spirit aims to provide protection, assurance and God's providence. Protection means that the believer is spared or protected from eternal punishment so that the believer gains eternal life. This is the Christian premise that the promise of eternal life in heaven is certain because the Holy Spirit is the guarantee. The guarantee is held until the believer obtains the whole. The seal is

²³ Buchanan, G.W., 1972, To the Hebrews: A new translation with introduction and commentary, Doubleday, New York. (The Anchor Bible).

²⁴ Bruce, F.F., 1990, The epistle to the Hebrews, rev. edn Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI. (NICNT).

²⁵ Bruner, F.D., 2012, The gospel of John: A commentary, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.

²⁶ Bruce, F.F., 1977, Paul, apostle of the free spirit, Paternoster, Exeter.

²⁷ Beeke, J.R., 2009, Reformatorische spiritualiteit, De Groot Goudriaan, Kampen.

also a sign of recognition that we are indeed children and proof that God has truly accepted our faith. We have been made God's own by the redeeming blood of Christ through our response of faith to God's grace.

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