

Never Perish!

According to the Society of Evangelical Arminians, the view that *“Salvation cannot be lost by accident, but it can be forfeited by deliberate choice and walked away from,”*¹ is the view of many Arminians.

John 10:28 is used to make the point. However, focus is only given to the last part of verse 28 and the beginning of verse 29: *“...neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand... [KJV]*

They point out that, yes, no one can “snatch” them out of the Father’s hand or the Son’s hand, but the truly saved person could still choose to walk out of God’s hands by themselves, rejecting God and His Salvation.

However, this is taking it out of context. If you back up even slightly you will see that choosing to reject your Salvation isn’t even a possibility. Starting with the beginning of verse 27: *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; **and they shall never perish**, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand...”*

Even the English word “never” does not allow for any exceptions. It can never happen, His sheep will *never* perish. More importantly, what does the Greek say? It is interesting to see that the English word “never” is used to translate more than one Greek word. It is actually translated from five Greek words:

οὐ μή εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα,

Literally “not, not in the age.” In English we might say something like “not in a million years!” That doesn’t mean it might happen at some point, it means it will never happen.

A Greek sentence can be negated by one of two words, οὐ or μή, depending upon the grammatical structure. However, unlike English, where two negatives cancel each other out making a positive, a double negative in Greek strengthens the negation exponentially. So οὐ μή doesn't just mean "not" it means "absolutely not, and the phrase "εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα" means "forever," so, altogether it means "absolutely not forever."

The Greek word translated "Perish" is "ἀπόλλυμι" and it means to be destroyed or die. So, His sheep will absolutely not ever be destroyed/die. This is strong enough in and of itself, but as Buist M. Fanning writes in William Mounce's Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar, it is further strengthened by the fact that...

*"...it is the use of the two negatives οὐ μή with a subjunctive verb to indicate a strong negation about the future. **The speaker uses the subjunctive verb to suggest a future possibility**, but in the same phrase he emphatically denies (by means of the double negative) that such could ever happen. This linguistic combination occurs about eighty-five times in the New Testament, often in significant promises or reassurances about the future..."*

*"...It would have been enough to have οὐ with a future indicative verb here, but Jesus is more emphatic. The subjunctive combination strongly denies **even the possibility** that any of Jesus's sheep would perish: "they will certainly not perish," "they will by no means perish," is the sense of Jesus's assertion. This is reinforced by the addition of the phrase εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, "forever." ² [emphasis mine]*

Jesus' statement in John 10:28 is unambiguous and cannot be misunderstood or misconstrued. The conclusion is clear: it is impossible for the genuine saved believer to ever lose or even give back his or her Salvation.

¹ Jackson, Kevin, *Can Salvation be Lost?* Society of Evangelical Arminians, 11-17-2008. Web.

<http://evangelicalarminians.org/can-salvation-be-lost/>

² Fanning, Buist M. qtd. in "*Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar*" 4th Ed, p 352. Print.