

# SAFE & SECURE

## The Permanence Of Salvation

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Can we lose our salvation? Can the belief of “once saved always saved” be biblically supported? Or is it merely an easy out for those who want the benefits of eternal life without having to give up the temporary pleasures of sin? If salvation can’t be lost or forfeited once it has been freely given by God, is there anything a disobedient Christian can lose?

These are important questions when we realize that the Bible offers many serious warnings about the danger of taking salvation for granted. We offer this booklet to you with the prayer that it will do for you what the message of Scripture should always do—provide comfort to those who are secure without giving false assurance to those who are not.

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## A LICENSE TO SIN

Ben glared at his wife in disbelief. His full beard couldn't hide the quivering lip. "How could you be so gullible?" he said. "I can't believe you'd fall for this. That friend of yours is poison." Ben moved closer. "You're playing the fool, Lucy. What you're talking about is nothing more than a license to sin. You know I'm right. You know the truth as well as I do. If a man turns away from the truth, he's worse off than if he had never heard it in the first place. The idea of 'once saved always saved' is a lie."

Lucy cringed under the weight of his convictions. She loved Ben, but he scared her when he got like this. She had never learned to handle his anger. It always made her feel so small and inadequate.

Maybe she had fallen for a lie. She began to fear the worst. Maybe she had fallen from the grace she wanted so much to believe in. Maybe Ben's anger was nothing more than a mirror of God Himself—a God who no longer saw her as being worthy of eternal life.

Yet, it had all sounded right. Ever since a friend at work started talking to her about a salvation that could never be lost, she had actually begun looking forward to going to work. She enjoyed those lunch hours where she had first heard the idea of eternal security. Then when she started attending the Thursday night Bible study, things seemed to fall into place. She had begun to think that the Bible really does promise a kind of special protection that would allow a Christian to live without fear of eternal punishment.

But now she was

confused. She wondered what was happening to her. Why did she feel so empty? She knew she was tired. All three children had been sick. It had been a long week at work. She knew she was physically and emotionally drained.

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***Could she have  
already fallen from  
the grace she  
wanted so much  
to believe in?***

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Fears and memories blurred together. She had heard so many stories about people who had started well in the faith, only to end up going back to their old ways when the going got rough. She had heard sermons warning that salvation was only for those who endured to the end (Mt. 24:13).

Maybe Ben was right.

She could see how the idea of “once saved always saved” might be an easy out for those who wanted the advantages of Christ without having to give up the pleasures of sin. She could see how it might let a person think he could play games with God and win. She knew the Bible said that God could not be mocked and that we would reap what we sow (Gal. 6:7).

But she also remembered those words of Jesus that her friend had repeated over and over:

*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and My Father are one (Jn. 10:27-30).*

# CAN YOU LOSE YOUR SALVATION?

**T**he issue Ben and his wife were arguing about may be described in a number of ways. Some refer to it as the doctrine of eternal security. Some call it the perseverance of the saints. Some just refer to it as “once saved always saved.”

## **It's a real issue.**

What if a Christian falls into serious sin? What if a good start in Christ ends badly? What would it take for God to disassociate Himself from a believer? The Scriptures do warn about the dangers of falling away from Christ.

**It's an emotional issue.** Because of changing emotions, few Christians *feel* saved all of the time. Feelings change like the weather—only more often. Therefore, those who

depend on how they feel about their eternal destiny will find themselves hounded by recurring feelings that say, “I had it. I lost it. How can I find it again?”

## **It's a specific issue.**

We're not talking about the assurance of salvation. Certainly anyone who is wrestling with security may also be wrestling with assurance. But in these pages we will be dealing specifically with the question of whether or not a person who has received salvation can forfeit that wonderful treasure.

## **It's a strategic issue.**

Those who say you can lose your salvation believe that a holy uncertainty is an important incentive to right living. Others believe that only when we are secure in our relationship with God can we live the kind of grateful existence the Scriptures call for.

# THE CASE FOR A PERMANENT SECURITY

This booklet will present the case for a salvation that cannot be lost. We will see that when God saves a person, He permanently breaks the grip of sin and death. Once and for all He gives us an irrevocable relationship with a Savior who promises to protect us by His own power all the way home. On the human side, this gift is marked at the very least by:

- Conviction of sin (Lk. 18:9-14)
- Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Jn. 5:1)
- A sense of correction for sin (Heb. 12:3-8)

When salvation is real, it should *also* result in overflowing gratitude and enthusiastic obedience. It *should* be marked by:

- Radical commitment to Christ (Lk. 14:25-33)

- Loving relationships (Jn. 15:9-17)

However, the New Testament shows that Christians may slip into behavior that seems to deny their claim of knowing Christ. Because of this, the Scriptures contain many severe warnings. Some caution professing believers to make sure that their faith is real. Others sound the alarm that although disobedient Christians cannot lose their salvation, there still is much to lose:

- Conscious fellowship with God
- The approval of God
- Influence for God
- Love, joy, peace, patience, self-control
- Reward
- Everything else that makes life meaningful

Yet, in spite of the possibility of major losses for the sinning Christian, the Bible makes it clear that God will, by His own

power, preserve their faith and security. True Christians have a personal, God-given faith in Christ that will endure to the end (Phil. 1:6; 2 Tim. 1:12). They may not be acting on that faith the way they should, but it is still there.

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***They didn't lose  
their salvation;  
they never had it  
in the first place.***

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When that is not the case—when a person repeatedly renounces Christ and appeals to some other basis for salvation—we must assume that such an individual was never saved in the first place. Of those who ultimately turn against Christ, the apostle John wrote:

*They went out from us,  
but they were not of us; for*

*if they had been of us,  
they would have continued  
with us; but they went out  
that they might be made  
manifest, that none of  
them were of us. . . . Who  
is a liar but he who denies  
that Jesus is the Christ?  
(1 Jn. 2:19,22).*

In His Sermon on the Mount, our Lord issued a solemn warning to people who mistakenly presumed upon their eternal security. He said:

*Many will say to Me in  
that day, "Lord, Lord,  
have we not prophesied  
in Your name, cast out  
demons in Your name,  
and done many wonders  
in Your name?" And then  
I will declare to them,  
"I never knew you; depart  
from Me, you who  
practice lawlessness!"  
(Mt. 7:22-23).*

Notice that the Lord said, "I never knew you." These were not people who lost something they earlier

possessed. They *never* had it. Time merely proved their insincerity of heart.



## THE BASIS FOR SECURITY

According to the New Testament, there is only one basis on which anyone can qualify for eternal refuge from the judgment of God's law. That one hope is summed up in two very simple words: *in Christ*. When I believe and trust in Christ, God sees me as being "in Him." My life is then "hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). I have a protection that begins and ends with God. Of this

wonderful plan the apostle Paul wrote:

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (Eph. 1:3-7).*

In light of this passage, could I be "in Christ" today but lose that protection at some point in the future? Could my faith or lack of

faith determine whether I am presently “in” or “out” of Christ?

The way we answer those questions may tell a lot about whether we have understood the wonderful salvation promises to those in Christ. Unfortunately, many who consider themselves Christians have no clear idea of what it means to be in Christ, once and for all, now and forever.

The New Testament doesn't call us to uncertainty. It calls us to believe in Christ, and on that basis to assume a new identity, a new nature, a new power, a new Lord, a new Father, a new family, a new destiny. It calls us to experience the truth that Paul wrote about in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

## **The Past In Christ: Salvation**

**Accomplished.** What if I told you that I knew my future was secure because I have already paid for all of my sins by being executed on a Roman cross? What if I told you I was buried and then raised from the dead to enjoy immunity from the eternal punishment of God? According to Romans 6, I have been:

- co-crucified in Christ (v.3)
- co-buried in Christ (v.4)
- co-resurrected in Christ (vv.4-5)
- freed from sin in Christ (vv.6-7)

This is the Christian's basis for security. In Christ, I have already paid for my crimes against God. That's history. It's past. It's done. Paul said it so clearly. In Christ, I died to sin. In Christ, I am alive forever. My past in Him frees me from the terrible, eternal death penalty of sin!

But how do we know

we're not just reading into Paul's words the kind of safety and security we want to believe in? We know because in Romans 6 Paul dealt with an objection that wouldn't make sense if he hadn't been teaching something that some would interpret as a license to sin:

*What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? . . . Therefore we were buried with Him . . . that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:1-2,4).*

This wouldn't make sense if Paul hadn't been teaching something that some would interpret as a license to sin.

Knowing this objection would be slow to die, Paul went on to write:

*What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of*

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***This wouldn't make sense if Paul hadn't been teaching something that some would interpret as a license to sin.***

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*obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free*

*from sin, you became slaves of righteousness (Rom. 6:15-18).*

It is only when we realize that our salvation depends on our confidence in what Christ *has done*, not on what we *will do*, that we truly have reason to live a life of grateful praise.

**The Present In Christ: Salvation Protected.** This is the current dimension of a security that doesn't depend on what we do but on what Christ has done for us. It reminds us that our Savior has not only paid the price for our salvation, but He has also promised to intercede for us in the present on the basis of what He did for us in the past. That's important because no matter how much we despise the idea of looking at security as a license to sin, we don't live up to our new potential and privilege in Christ.

When we are so

overcome by our guilt that we seriously wonder if we have lost our position in Christ, then we need to take comfort in the fact that in Christ we have the ultimate Advocate and Intercessor.

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*We will struggle with the desires of our flesh until we are home with the Lord.*

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We need to read over and over the reassuring words of the apostle John, who wrote:

*My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world (1 Jn. 2:1-2).*

This deals with Christ's protection of our salvation in the present. It says that when we find ourselves slugging it out with the consequences and emotions of our foolishness, then we need to realize that being in Christ we have the ultimate defense.

You may not even know that you have a Lawyer. But you do if you are in Christ. He's been retained by God for the very purpose of handling your daily sins. Trust Him. There is no better. He's never lost a case—and He never will.

Some have speculated that this Public Defender has never actually had to argue a case. They believe He merely holds up His hands whenever an accuser mentions the names of anyone He's agreed to defend. There's something about those hands that always wins.

How could you possibly

lose your salvation when you are in Jesus Christ. He Himself is your:

- Advocate
- Intercessor
- Payment for sin
- Righteousness before God and man

We can agree with Paul, who wrote, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31).

### **The Future In Christ: Salvation Completed.**

This raises another issue. What about that day in the future when we all stand before the Judge in the final day of accountability? Is it possible that at that critical point we might lose everything?

We've all heard it said that when it comes to our day in court, so much depends on the judge we get. Many criminals have trembled at the thought of getting a tough judge. Some magistrates have a heart. Some are even known for

being lenient. Others are known for throwing the book at those they don't like. Some have a reputation for always giving the maximum sentence allowed.

Is it possible that we could get a judge who shows no mercy? Is it possible that we could get a judge who would not recognize the spiritual argument that had kept us alive up to that point? What if the judge says, "No way. You're not getting off the hook just because someone loves you. You are a sinner. You are going to pay for your crimes, every one of them, until you have completely fulfilled your obligation to the righteous law of God. Away with you. Depart into the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels."

It's an awful thought. But it will never be a reality for those who are in Christ. We already know who is going to be hearing our

case. Our Judge will be the same one who has been defending us all of these years on the basis of His death on our behalf.

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***The Judge has  
been preassigned,  
and the main  
verdict has been  
preannounced!***

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God has already announced that He has given authority to His Son to judge the earth (Jn. 5:24-30). It is at the judgment seat of Christ where we who are in Christ must one day appear (Rom. 14:1-12; 2 Cor. 5:10). And it is that same announced Judge who has already assured all who are in Him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and

shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life” (Jn. 5:24).

If you have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, count on those words. They are God’s promise to you. You don’t ever have to worry about losing your salvation, because *in Him* you have:

- A Savior who died for all your sins
- The best defense possible
- A Judge who loves you
- A preannounced verdict

In that light, then, can you see that those who are in Christ really do have a security based not on their own record but on His? They are accepted not on the merits of their own name but on His. Can you see how those who are in Him have a permanent file that has been purged? They have an Attorney who has never lost a case, a Judge

who loves them, and a preannounced verdict on all charges that might put their eternal salvation in jeopardy—all because they are in Christ!



## THE PLAN FOR SECURITY

From time to time you may run into someone who teaches that Christians do have absolute security in Christ—but only as long as they live and walk in Him. Such a person might suggest that the promises of eternal security are always conditional—that they always depend on whether or not we remain faithful to

Christ. For instance, once-saved-always-saved people like to point out that Romans 8:1 says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” But the conditional security people are quick to respond that the entire verse actually says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, *who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.*”

Paul was not implying, however, that a Christian is secure only as long as he behaves in a manner consistent with the Spirit. His statements that follow show that when he referred to those who “walk in the Spirit,” he was talking about those who, because they are in Christ, live in the realm of the Spirit (8:9). Even more significantly, he went on in the same chapter to describe a plan

that clearly shows that Christian security is not something that depends on human performance.

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***Our salvation  
depends on a  
plan that begins  
and ends with  
God Himself.***

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Paul wrote about this comprehensive plan in the following passage:

*For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us,*

*who can be against us?*  
(Rom. 8:29-31).

**The Past Roots Of God's Plan.** Paul was clear that being in Christ isn't an "on again, off again," "maybe I'll make it, maybe I won't" kind of faith. It's important to realize that in eternity past everyone in Christ has been:

- Foreknown  
(Rom. 8:29; 1 Pet. 1:2)
- Predestined  
(Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:5)
- Chosen  
(Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:2)

God selected us in eternity past to be the objects of His love and grace. Even though He could see all of our sin and rebellion, He still chose us in Christ. His sovereign decision was completely apart from any human merit.

This foreknowledge of God is important to us. Because of sin, you and I are damaged merchandise. But the One who bought us

knew all about that. He knew exactly what He was getting. No surprises for Him. He wants us to know that He chose us long before we ever thought of Him.

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*God knew  
beforehand that  
He was paying  
the ultimate price  
for damaged  
merchandise.*

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Furthermore, He predecided the outcome. While working with our will in a way that is beyond our ability to understand, He predetermined that we would ultimately be conformed to the image and character of His Son.

We may have questions and doubts about whether we are going to make it all the way to the kingdom of

God. But the Lord has already worked that out for our wonderful and eternal benefit. If we trust Christ who died for our sins and rose from the dead on our behalf, and if we accept His gracious gift of eternal life, then we can be sure that He first chose us.

**The Present Outworking Of God's Plan.** The Lord has done more than just think about us in the corridors of eternity past. At the right time, and in our 20th-century lifetime, He came calling for us.

This is important. He wants us to know that we don't have to go up on mountaintops and bang on pans to get His attention. We don't have to write long applications and submit résumés to His office of admissions. He knew us. He chose us in Christ. He predetermined the outcome in eternity past, and then just a few days or months

or years ago He called us—His 20th-century children—to Himself.

At this point I would encourage you to read and reread Romans 8:28-32 and as much of the surrounding context as you can. Even though other Scriptures indicate that our part is to respond in faith to His call, *this* description of God's plan doesn't mention the human side. It doesn't say anything about His waiting to see whether we would receive Christ and then hang on by faith until the end. On the contrary, this portion of God's Word shows the Lord taking divine initiatives to assure His mission's success. It shows us that salvation is of the Lord.

Paul didn't say that the Lord called and then waited to see who would respond. He said, "Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also

justified” (8:30). It’s hard to overemphasize the point of Paul’s teaching here. While in other parts of this same letter he emphasized the human responsibility of personal choices and faith in Christ, here he showed what God has done to assure the final outcome.

God justifies those He calls to Christ. In legal terms, that means He declares righteous those who believe in His Son. On the basis of His Son’s death, God acquits those who come to Him for mercy. Exercising His prerogative as the presiding Judge of the universe, God says that we are not to be charged with eternal punishment for our sin.

If you wonder whether that’s what Paul really had in mind in Romans 8, read verses 33 and 34: “Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who

died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”

The point here is that, from the world’s perspective, there might be many things that could be said against us. Because of our spiritual immaturity, we often sin. There is much dirt that could be thrown at us,

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***Who can find  
us guilty after  
God has declared  
us innocent?***

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but God responds in our defense. To our accusers He declares something like, “Who do you think you are to accuse someone whom I have declared righteous. I’m the One who is passing the judgment around here. And My Son is the One who has paid the price that enables

Me to do so. The one you accuse of sin is one that I have pre-chosen and justified for Myself.”

**The Future Assurance Of God’s Plan.** Romans 8 doesn’t leave us wondering if we need to be justified following each new scrape with God’s law. This passage, along with the previous chapters, shows that God has designed a rescue that changes our relationship to the law once and for all. We are given a new status that covers our future as well as our past. In this light, Paul said, “For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace” (6:14).

What words! Not under law but under grace. This is the ultimate kind of immunity and perpetual pardon. It is a kind of protection that allows God to announce the final outcome of our salvation as

if it were already accomplished. So Paul could write, “Whom He justified, these He also glorified” (8:30). We usually think of glorification as something that will occur at some point in eternity future. In the mind of God, however, it has already occurred.

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*God’s plan doesn’t leave us wondering if we are going to make it to heaven or not.*

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But someone may reply, “How do we know that God has not merely predetermined the eternal outcome of those He knows will remain true to the end? How do we know that He is not merely exercising His ability to see what we have not yet seen?” We know that such a view would violate

everything we have seen up to this point. God has arranged a salvation that rests on the death of Christ for us, on His life in us, on His defense of us, and on His ongoing intervention and intercession on our behalf.

Read verses 31 to 34 over and over. See and feel deep in your heart how fully and finally the issue of sin has been settled by the death of Christ once and for all. Then read verses 35 to 39 again and again. See if you still have questions about whether or not the plan of God assures the safety of the Christian into the future.

How could Paul be any clearer about the future outcome? After reflecting on the very real life-threatening possibilities that all of us must live with, he declared:

*Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded*

*that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:37-39).*

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***In Christ, there is legal protection for the future as well as the past.***

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That's the future of everyone in Christ. Because He has unilaterally resolved the sin question once and for all, there is nothing in the future that can prevent the foreknown, predestined, called, justified, and glorified child of God from getting to the place God has prepared for him. That's

why our Lord could say to the woman at the well:

*Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life (Jn. 4:13-14).*



## **THE PROCESS OF SECURITY**

It's one thing to talk about God's part in our salvation; it's another to talk about man's part. What about the human realities of moral and spiritual failure, fallout,

and even defection? More than one person has started well and ended up badly. From a human point of view, it often looks as though such a person has lost his salvation. Even the apostle Paul seemed at a loss to explain what it meant when someone strayed from the faith. Yet his response is a model for our own. He wrote, "Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: 'The Lord knows those who are His,' and, 'Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity'" (2 Tim. 2:19). The apostle had to admit that there are many things about who is saved and who is not saved that only God knows.

This reminds us that we cannot always tell who is and who is not a child of God. This might be hard for us to accept. It is easier if we are able to assume that Christians are those who

live like Christians, and non-Christians are those who don't. But appearances can be deceiving. This is because in many ways salvation is a process that was made sure in the past, is changing us in the present, and will be completed in the future.

**The Past Tense Of The Salvation Process.** In Romans 5, Paul declared:

*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand . . . . having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him (vv.1-2,9).*

Here we are reminded that someone in Christ should think of himself not as one trying to be saved or hoping to be saved, but as

one who has already been saved. This is exactly what the apostle said in his letter to the Ephesians:

*You He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world . . . . But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved) . . . . For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast (2:1-2,4-5,8-9).*

Many people in the church don't have such assurance of having been saved from the eternal penalty of their sins. But such a view is foundational to the New Testament.

## **The Present Tense Of The Salvation**

**Process.** This is where the great drama of salvation is so often stalled. Without losing their security and their immunity from prosecution, Christians can easily lose their battles over sin. Although in Christ they have already won the war, there are many battles that can still be lost. Sin can get

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*Even with the  
war won, many  
strategic battles  
can be lost.*

---

us down and rob us of our faith, hope, joy, and love in Christ. Poor choices can temporarily enslave us to the very sins from which we have already been delivered. Such failures can sometimes cause a child of God, for a while at least, to

be indistinguishable from a child of Satan.

For this reason Paul pleaded:

*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. . . . But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth (Col. 3:1-5,8).*

Paul's appeal is for Christians to live in a

manner that is consistent with who they are in Christ. In other words, have you been saved from the eternal consequences of your sin? Then live like it! Live like someone who is headed for heaven. Don't be overcome by the power of sin!

Obviously, Paul was at the same time admitting that someone who is in Christ could still fall into all of the sins he listed. Otherwise his words would make no sense. He was saying that someone who has been saved and whose life is hidden with Christ in God may still have to be urged to turn away from his sin.

But what if he doesn't respond? What if he dies without returning to the Lord? Does he lose his salvation? Not if he was truly saved. Not if what we have seen up to this point is correct. What can happen, however, is that the Christian can lose many

temporary and even future benefits. A disobedient child of God can lose:

- Opportunities for doing good
- Irreplaceable time
- Peace of mind
- Joy of heart
- Self-control
- Confidence
- Usefulness to God
- Reputation
- Health
- Relationships
- Physical life
- The approval of God
- Eternal rewards

Even though these might be called peripherals, in that they do not jeopardize the eternal well-being of our soul, it is obvious that they are not incidentals. The Lord loves us too much to let us live without fatherly correction even when we allow ourselves to be overcome by the power of sin (Heb. 12:1-11). He might even take us home prematurely as He did some

of the disobedient Christians in Corinth (1 Cor. 11:29-32). Even though our eternal destiny is not at risk, it can be “a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31).

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***The struggle  
for right choices  
won't be over  
until we see Him  
face to face.***

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**The Future Tense Of The Salvation Process.** The day is coming when the process will be complete. We won't always be struggling with sin.

*Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the*

*world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure (1 Jn. 3:1-3).*

Throughout John's first letter, he emphatically stated that unless there is a basic change of direction and life, there will be no evidence or assurance that we really have been saved. But we must not expect to be saved from the presence of sin and its struggle until the day we see Christ face to face. That's when our salvation will be complete.

## SOME SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

**Should we just assume that all those who claim to be Christians are saved, no matter how they are living?** No, the

burden of proof is on the person who claims to be a new creation in Christ. Anyone who says he knows Christ as Savior should prove it by living a life that supports his claim. Paul said of such persons, “The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2 Tim. 2:19).

The apostle John indicated that some who depart from the faith reveal that they were never really saved in the first place. He wrote, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued

with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us” (1 Jn. 2:19). Given such possibilities, all we can do is conclude that a person either is or is not giving evidence of having eternal life. God alone is his Judge.

**If salvation cannot be lost, then why do so many of the promise passages have conditions attached to them?**

The Word of God attaches human conditions such as faith, love, or doing the will of God, not to imply that salvation is dependent on human performance but to distinguish those who are saved from those who are not. If the Bible did not attach conditions to salvation and security, it would seem to teach that all men everywhere are saved. Faith, love, and obedience to God give

evidence of the saving life and presence of Christ. “By this we know that we are in Him” (1 Jn. 2:5).

**If salvation cannot be lost, why does the Bible warn about the possibility of falling away?** Some of these warnings are directed to people who do not really possess what they profess.

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*Some of the warnings are for those who profess what they do not possess.*

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For instance, Hebrews 10:26-31 warns that if someone deliberately abandons the faith in Christ he once professed, he will find nothing else, no other sacrifice that is able to save him. While such a person

had been associated with the “set-apart community,” he was never a true believer. The writer of Hebrews affirmed this when he went on to write of true believers who had shown real evidence of faith, “But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul” (Heb. 10:39).

Hebrews 6:1-9 is another warning passage often referred to by those who believe you can lose your salvation. It too speaks of those who fall away after they “have tasted the heavenly gift.” It too speaks of the dangers of falling under the fiery judgment of God. But what does it mean? It has been explained in a number of ways. Some think the passage is again referring to people who finally reject a salvation they professed but never possessed. Others interpret

it as a warning to believers who might be inclined to think that a person who falls into sin needs to be saved again. Still others believe it refers to the kind of severe loss that a sinning Christian can incur. Whatever the right interpretation, the inspired author was clearly warning about things he didn't expect to happen to the believers he was writing to. In verse 9 he said, "Beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner" (Heb. 6:9).

**What does the Bible mean when it says that only those who endure to the end will be saved?** Those who are truly saved are those who will endure. Others may stick around for a while, but endurance is a sign that God's presence and power is at work in a

person's life. For this reason, Paul could say to the Philippians that he was "confident . . . that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (1:6).

In Matthew 24:13 there is a specific reference to the problem of enduring spiritual decadence and persecution in the tribulation period. But the principle still stands that those who endure give proof of the Lord's saving work in them.

**Why does the Bible say that we are to work hard to get into heaven?** Such a question may reflect a number of passages, each of which has a slightly different slant. For instance, 2 Peter 1:10-11 says, "Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be

supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

This passage indicates that as we work hard in our Christian walk our salvation becomes more sure, certain, and beyond all doubt. The whole chapter is speaking of the need to have a fruitful and productive knowledge of Christ, not of the possibility of losing one’s salvation. This will lead to an abundant, rewarded entrance into the kingdom of God. Peter was speaking to people who are inclined to lose sight of the forgiveness they have already received (1:9).

**What did Paul mean when he referred to falling from grace?** Paul wrote, “You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4). This is threatening, but it doesn’t

refer to a loss of salvation already received. There are at least two possibilities. It could refer to the Judaizers, who believed that salvation came ultimately through keeping the law. If such persons turned away from Christ, whom they had never really learned to depend on, they would be turning away from their only hope of salvation.

Another possibility takes into account what Paul described in Galatians 3. There the apostle talked about Jewish Christians who accepted Christ in order to be saved, but made the mistake of thinking they could go on to maturity by keeping the law. Paul made it clear that they needed to trust the same Spirit of Christ for perfection and maturity as they did for salvation. If they didn’t, they would fall from the principle of grace. They would not lose their salvation, but they

would lose the undeserved power and enablement of God, which first leads to salvation, then to true Christian experience.

**Doesn't 1 Peter 1:4-5 say that we are kept by our faith?** That is only partially true. This passage is actually saying that we are kept by a faith that is in turn kept by the power of God. Specifically, Peter wrote of a salvation "that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Peter knew this faith-preserving power firsthand. Prior to his denial of Christ, the Lord told Peter that Satan had asked to test him. But He had interceded for Peter and prayed that his faith would not fail (Lk. 22:31-34). This is a beautiful picture of the human and divine sides of salvation. Peter's faith was the means

of trust and relationship, and it was protected by God's sovereign grace and Christ's intercession.

**Didn't the apostle Paul himself show signs of uncertainty in 1 Corinthians 9:27 and Philippians 3:12-14?**

No. In the first passage, Paul was not concerned about losing his salvation but about losing his usefulness as a servant of Christ. In Philippians 3:12-14, Paul expressed his deep desire to experience more and more of Jesus Christ. He was not longing to be saved but to grow in the righteousness and maturity of Christ.

**Didn't Peter imply that some who fall away from the faith would have been better off if they had never been saved in the first place?** Peter was speaking of false teachers when he wrote the following:

*For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: "A dog returns to his own vomit," and, "a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Pet. 2:20-22).*

The illustration at the end of this passage shows us that Peter was not implying a loss of salvation. Since the dog was still a dog, and the pig was still a pig, they both went back to

their own natural ways. Both returned because neither had experienced an essential change of nature. At best, both had merely been cleaned, combed, pampered, and flattered.

This is the best explanation for those who appear to have completely lost any faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. But if the truth were known, they never had it. They may have enjoyed many of the benefits of the truth and people of God for a while, but it had never resulted in a real change of heart. They had grown up among the wheat as hard-to-tell-the-difference weeds (tares). But in time they showed their true colors. John explained that, in leaving, they showed that their salvation was not the real thing (1 Jn. 2:19).

# CHECKLIST FOR ASSURANCE AND SECURITY

In light of what we have covered, let's see now how you check out. For evidence and assurance that you have been saved, ask yourself the following questions. Do you:

- recognize your need of a Savior? (Rom. 3:23).
- believe that Jesus is the Christ? (1 Jn. 5:1).
- believe that He died for your sins? (1 Jn. 2:2).
- desire to obey the Lord? (1 Jn. 2:3-6).
- love the people of God? (1 Jn. 3:14).
- sense God's Spirit in you? (Rom. 8:16).
- sense correction for your sin? (Heb. 12:5-9).

For evidence of your eternal security, remember that when you accepted Christ as Savior, you were:

- reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:18),

- purchased at a great price (1 Pet. 1:18-19),
- freed from the law (Rom. 8:1-2; Gal. 5:1-4),
- declared righteous (Rom. 5:1),
- set apart for God (Jn. 17:17),
- glorified (Rom. 8:17,30),
- forgiven (Eph. 4:32),
- indwelt by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9),
- indwelt by Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:20),
- indwelt by the Father (Eph. 4:6),
- spiritually gifted (1 Cor. 12:7; Eph. 4:7),
- made part of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13),
- placed in God and in Christ (Eph. 1:3-4; 2:5-6),
- made an heir of God (Rom. 8:17),
- adopted into the family of God (Eph. 1:5),
- made complete in Christ (Col. 2:9-10),
- made secure (Jn. 10:27-30; Rom. 8:38-39).

# THREE KINDS OF SECURITY

## **Sure but not secure.**

These people believe that they have confirmed reservations in heaven. But they're self-deceived. They are like the legalists of Christ's day who mistakenly thought that God would accept them on the basis of their own good efforts (Lk. 18:9-14).

## **Secure but not sure.**

Such a person has trusted Christ as Savior and is held firmly in the protective hand of God (Jn. 10:27-29). But when failure occurs and guilt comes in like a flood, or when mental, physical, and emotional exhaustion set in, such a person becomes confused by feelings.

**Sure and secure.** This person has accepted Christ as his personal Savior, has continued to walk in this new relationship, and enjoys

the confirming evidence that signals the reality of new birth. This evidence is described in 1 John:

- Belief in Christ's saving work (4:9-10; 5:1).
- Confidence in the Word of God (2:5; 5:13).
- A new way of life (2:3-6).
- The awareness of the Spirit (4:13; 5:6-13).
- A love for other Christians (3:14).

We sincerely hope that you are both sure and secure. If not, we urge you to make sure you have taken the first step. Recognize that there is nothing you can do to escape the penalty of your own sin— except to throw yourself on the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ, His death for your sins, and His saving life. Trust Him today for what you could never do for yourself and then rely totally on God's promises (see Jn. 3:16; 6:37; 10:27-30; Rom. 6:23; 8:28-39).

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