

ETERNAL *Security*

Is our position in Christ eternally secure?



The doctrine of eternal security has historically been called the “perseverance of the saints.” It does not mean that God simply hangs a forgiven sign around a believer’s neck and they are free to live as they please with no conviction. Eternal security means that believers, by the power of God’s grace, will continue to trust in Christ and seek after Him for all eternity.

At salvation, God Himself changes the heart and causes the believer to become a new creature. Those who have truly been saved may fall into sin, but because they have been given a new heart and mind, they cannot fall away from the faith. Eternal security is not a license to sin. It is the recognition that the mighty power of God in salvation forever changes the believer.

Secure in Him

We have already discussed the tri-unity of God in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The three persons are one being in perfect harmony with each other. In Scripture, our salvation is seen as an eternal reality because the three persons of God are unified in their actions.

Jesus said, **“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.”** (John 6:37-39). Notice the actions of the Father and Son. All those the Father gives will come to the Son, and all that come to the Son will never be cast

out but will be raised up on the last day. Make sure you understand Jesus’ words. Jesus came to do the will of the Father so ALL those who come to Him will be raised up on the last day. How could Jesus make a statement like this if it were not sure? If men could fall away, how could Jesus say He would raise them up?

The Seal of the Lord is His Holy Spirit

And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are **sealed** unto the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30).

Likewise, the Spirit Himself seals us when we are saved. Eph. 1:13-14 says, **“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”** The indwelling Holy Spirit is

the seal, the earnest (down payment) of our inheritance “until the redemption of the purchased possession.” At salvation, you are the possession of God, purchased with the blood of Christ and marked eternally with the Spirit.



The case against eternal security?

Usually the case against eternal security rests on faulty presuppositions and taking verses out of context. There are quite a few verses of Scripture that are used. We will look at what I consider the most common:

1. **Ezekiel 18:24** *"But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die."*

This is an example of taking an author out of his own context. Instead of letting Ezekiel define what he means by "righteous," many immediately assume he means a person who is saved by grace through faith. Ezekiel is pronouncing judgment on Israel for their own sins, but Israel blames their sin on their forefathers. God shows them through several examples that they are each responsible for their own individual sins.

Ezekiel defines a "righteous" person as one who does what is just and right (18:5), worships Yahweh as the one and only God (v. 6), maintains marital fidelity and moral purity (v. 6), is a good neighbor (v. 7-8), and respects and obeys the laws of God (v. 9). He is talking about a lifestyle of seeking God's will. The immediate context teaches man's responsibility before God, not the eternal status of those purchased by Christ.

2. **John 8:31 and Heb. 3:14** - John 8:31 says, *"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;"* and Heb. 3:14 says, *"For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;"*

At first glance, these verses look like it is possible to lose your salvation don't they? But look closer.

Look at the tenses of the verbs. John 8:31 says if you continue (future action), then you are (present tense) truly my disciples. He isn't saying if you continue, then you **will be** my disciples. The continuing in His word will give the evidence that you **already are** a disciple.

In the same way, Heb. 3:14 says we have been made (past perfect tense) partakers, if we hold (right now) our confidence. Being made partakers is a completed action in the past and holding our confidence is going on right now. Holding our confidence, therefore, is the evidence that we have already been made partakers.

3. Heb. 6:4-8 *"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."*

This is perhaps the most abused text in terms of eternal security. Many claim this is speaking of a true believer in Christ falling away from the faith. However, this is contrary to the context of the book of Hebrews. The book is written to Jewish church members who are going back into Judaism and returning to the sacrifices of the law. They have been in the congregations and seen the power of Christ in people's lives. They have seen the Holy Spirit work and have gone back to the old ways.

If this verse is talking about true believers, it would be saying that those who fall away can never be saved again. The key here is verse 9, which is rarely quoted. It says, *"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and **things that accompany salvation**, though we thus speak."* If the person in v. 4-6 is saved, what are the things that accompany salvation in verse 9?

A large, realistic human hand is shown from the palm side, holding several celestial bodies. In the center of the palm is a bright, glowing blue and white nebula. To the left of the thumb is a dark blue planet. To the right of the index finger is a small yellow planet. Further right, near the ring finger, is a small blue planet. The background is a deep space scene with green and blue nebulae and distant stars.

Upheld by the Hand of God

“Perseverance may be defined as that continuous operation of the Holy Spirit in the believer, by which the work of divine grace that is begun in the heart is continued and brought to completion. It is because God never forsakes His work that believers continue to stand to the very end.” – Louis Berkhof

1. We are kept by the promise of God

“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.” - John 6:37-39

2. We are kept by the power of God

“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, 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. I and my Father are one.” - John 10:28-30

3. We are kept by the passion of God

“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 creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” - Rom. 8:38-39

4. We are kept by the priestly work of God

“And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an

*unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them **to the uttermost** (perfectly) that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” Heb. 7:23-25*

5. We are kept by the presence of God

“In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” - Eph. 1:13-14

Prescription vs. Description

One of the biggest impediments to right biblical understanding is the difference between descriptive language and prescriptive language - unknown

There are many passages of Scripture that plainly state that salvation is by grace through faith. Eph. 2:8-9 says, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Likewise, Rom. 5:1-2 says, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

If these verses are clear and plain, what are we to do with the many verses that seem to include works in the equation? For example, Mark 11:26 says, “But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.” Likewise, Matt. 7:21 says that only those who do the will of God will be accepted by Christ. We also see this in Matthew 25:41-46.

Resolving these dilemmas is quite simple. It is the difference between prescriptive and descriptive language. Prescriptive language tells us what we “should” do. It prescribes a type of behavior to gain a reward. However, descriptive language describes what we “will” do.

For example, Matt. 7:21 says “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”

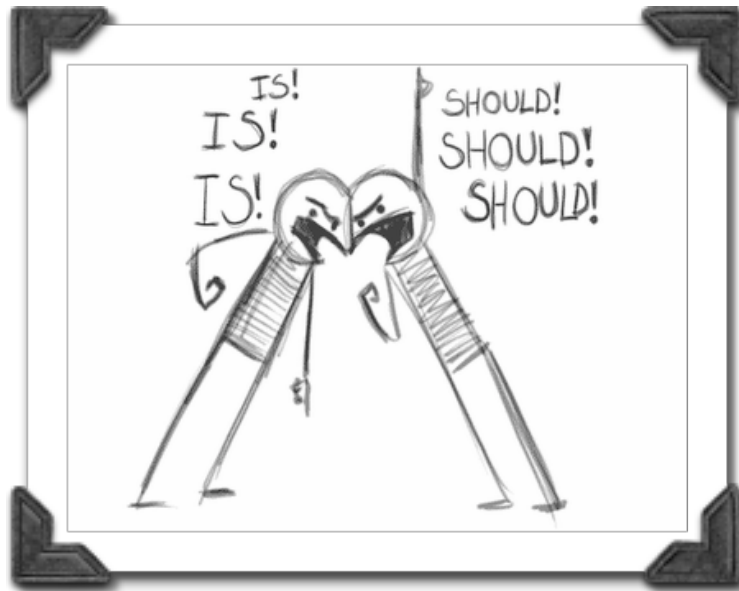
Does this verse say, “you better start doing the will of the Father or you won’t get into heaven?” That would be prescriptive.

Or, does this verse say, “Those people whose faith doesn’t lead them to do the will of the Father won’t enter heaven, even if they cry Lord, Lord?” That is descriptive.

Scripture is abundantly clear that salvation is by grace through faith. There is absolutely no work that can enter into the picture. However, Scripture is also clear that those people who are saved by grace will exhibit good works and godly fruit in their lives.

So those passages that seem to suggest that a work is necessary to obtain salvation are really describing what a saved life looks like.

It is true that if you don’t forgive, your heavenly Father won’t forgive you. But, it is also true that the grace of God in salvation changes the heart so it recognizes the necessity to forgive others.





Study Questions

1. Do you have assurance that you are truly born again? Do you see evidence in your own life to give you that assurance?

2. Do you think that God wants true believers to go on throughout life worrying about whether they are really born again, or to have firm assurance that they are his people? (See 1 John 5:13)

3. Are you trusting in your own power to keep on believing in Christ, or in God’s power to keep your faith active and alive?

4. If you have doubts about whether you are truly born again what is it in your life that is giving reason for those doubts? What would Scripture encourage you to do to resolve these doubts? (See 2 Pt. 1:5-11)

5. Do you think that Jesus now knows about your doubts and understands them? What do you think he would like you to do now to gain greater assurance of salvation?

6. Have you known people, perhaps in your church, whose “fruit” is always destructive or divisive or harmful to the ministry of the church and the faith of others?

7. If you believed you had to add something to maintain your salvation, would that nullify the “sufficiency” of Christ’s sacrifice? In other words, if you have to add works to be saved, does that mean that Jesus isn’t enough to save?

8. Answering honestly, are you trusting in Christ for your salvation or are you trusting in the sincerity of your faith, your works, or your own commitment? Can you explain the difference?
