

The Security of the Believer

“And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life” (1 John 2:25).

Like the issue of the gifts of the Spirit that we studied in Lesson 7, the issue of the security of the believer’s salvation has caused a deep rift within the Church. Once again, it appears that the reason or culprit is improper handling of the scriptures.

The Bible clearly shows that within the Church Age, once salvation is obtained, there is no way it can ever be lost. Consider the following verse:

“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Peter 1:23).

We are born again of incorruptible seed! We simply cannot be corrupted or made guilty of sin.

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (1 John 3:9).

There are passages, however, which upon casual observation appear to cast doubt on this position. In fact, many brilliant and effective men of God have stood on the wrong side of the eternal security issue. This is not an issue on which one’s hope of eternal salvation hangs in the balance, and yet it is important because a wrong view can, in some cases, hamper a Christian’s effectiveness and joy in the Lord. Hopefully, by the time you finish this lesson you will understand that there is a logical and reasonable answer to these doubts. The position of eternal security survives examination and is found to be a pillar of sound doctrine for the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Note: As in the previous lesson, *Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, produced by Merrill F. Unger and published by Moody Press has been extensively referenced, especially in sections I and III. It is an excellent source of information for comprehensive definitions of biblical or doctrinal terms.

I. The Basis for the Doctrine of Eternal Security

According to Merrill F. Unger, the doctrine of the believer's security is based on twelve undertakings of God for His people. Four are related to the Father, four to the Son, and four to the Holy Ghost.

A. The Father's undertakings

1. The efficacy of the perpetual prayers of the Son upon the Father

John 17:9–12, 15, 20; Hebrews 7:22–25

“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

2. Infinite, divine power made available to save and keep

John 10:29; Romans 4:21; 8:31–39; Ephesians 1:19–21

3. God's infinite love

Ephesians 1:4–5; Romans 5:7–10

4. God's sovereign purpose or covenant, which is unconditional

John 3:16; John 6:37

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that beareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24).

B. The Son's undertakings

1. His intercession

John 17:1–26; Hebrews 7:23–25

“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us”

(Romans 8:34).

2. His advocacy

Romans 8:34; Hebrews 9:24

“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).

3. His substitutionary death

Romans 8:1–4; 1 John 2:2

4. His glorious resurrection

Luke 24:1–7; John 3:16; Ephesians 2:6

C. The Holy Ghost's undertakings

1. Regeneration, or quickening unto eternal life, which is the partaking of the divine nature and an entrance into that which cannot be removed

John 1:13; John 3:3–6; Titus 3:4–6; 1 John 3:9

“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13).

2. Baptism, by which the believer is united to Christ so as to partake eternally in the new creation glory and blessing

1 Corinthians 6:17; 12:13; Galatians 3:27

3. Sealing, by which the Holy Ghost stamps and thus secures the Christian as God's child

Ephesians 1:13–14; 4:30

4. Indwelling, by which the Spirit inhabits the redeemed body forever

John 7:37–39; Romans 5:5; 8:9; 1 Corinthians 6:19;

1 John 2:27

II. The Proof Scriptures for Eternal Security Examined

There are a number of scriptures in the New Testament that clearly state the case for eternal security. After reviewing these, it is difficult to imagine that one could take another viewpoint that is strictly based on scripture.

A. It is God's will to lose no one

“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. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day”
(John 6:37–40).

Jesus will not cast us off if only because that is the will of the Father. We know that it goes much deeper than that though, because He died for us and defeated death and hell to save us. He loves us completely in His own right

B. No man can overcome God's will

“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. 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 10:27–30).

Jesus assures us that no man can pluck us out of His hand or out of His Father's hand either, since He and the Father are one Lord

C. We ourselves cannot overcome God's will

*Ephesians 2:8-9; James 2:10; 2 Timothy 1:12;
Galatians 2:21; 3:10*

*“And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith”
(Philippians 3:9).*

No man is justified by the law. If we had to keep the law, or earn our way to heaven through our works, none of us would make it. We must live by faith in our Lord's continuing intercession for us.

D. Nothing else can overcome God's will

“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” (Romans 8:38–39).

E. You are God's son and an heir to His throne

John 1:12–13; Galatians 3:26

*“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together”
(Romans 8:16–17).*

Your spirit has been born of God. You are His child and nothing can ever change that just as nothing can ever change the fact that you are the child of your earthly father

F. We have scriptural proof that we can know we have eternal life

“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (1 John 5:11–13).

G. We are sealed until the day of redemption

Ephesians 1:13

“And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30).

H. We are saved even when we don’t feel like it

Luke 10:20; Titus 1:2

“For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things” (1 John 3:20).

Our salvation is based on the facts of our sonship and God having applied the atonement in our lives, not on how we feel at a particular time.

I. It is a promise from an Almighty God that cannot lie

Titus 1:2

“And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life” (1 John 2:25).

III. The Common Sources of Error Examined

The scriptures, as was pointed out earlier, teach that eternal security is in effect throughout the Church Age (also known as the “dispensation of the grace of God” (Ephesians 3:2) and thus a definable era). This can be deduced from the verses that tell us we are sealed only until the day of redemption (Ephesians 1:13–14; 4:30).

The day of redemption refers to the redemption of the body when it is resurrected (or raptured) and glorified (Romans 8:21–23). Therefore this sealing is not promised to any (unsaved) who are living prior to the rapture (within the Church Age) and continue past it into the great tribulation. That is one good reason to adhere to the scriptural injunction: “Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: (Isaiah 55:6, 2 Corinthians 6:2).

This time limitation causes some confusion because the Bible gives a lot of information about the age that immediately follows the Church Age. This age starts with the tribulation and includes the millennium. In these periods the need for faith is virtually eliminated because concrete proof of the existence of Jehovah God/Jesus Christ will be readily available. Scriptures that refer to salvation in the Millennial Age give evidence that works become the test for loyalty to God and that people whose works are evil can lose their salvation. These passages are often improperly applied to the Church Age, thus leading to the belief that one could lose salvation in the Church Age.

There are other, less reasonable causes of error that also must be mentioned. By studying the following statements with the verses referenced, as recorded by Merrill F. Unger, you should be able to understand the most common errors in judgment.

A. Passages dispensationally misapplied

Ezekiel 3:17-21; Matthew 18:23-35; 24:13; 25:1-13

B. Passages concerning false teachers for the last days of the church that concern apostates or those who were never saved

1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Peter 2:1-22; Jude 7-19

C. Passages comprehending no more than moral reform: for example

Luke 11:24-26

D. Passages relating to loss of rewards and chastisement

John 15:2; 1 Corinthians 3:15; 9:27; 11:27-32; Colossians 1:21-23; 1 John 1:5-9; 5:16

E. Passages relating to falling from grace, that is leaving the grace way of life for the legalistic way of life

Galatians 5:4

F. Passages containing various admonitions

Hebrews 6:4-9; 10:26-31

IV. Eternal Security, the Only Logical Viewpoint

“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” (Hebrews 6:4–6).

From the above verses you can see that, if a person were to lose his salvation, he could never be saved again. He would be forever doomed to damnation. Yet a major tenet of those who do not accept eternal security as doctrine is that they can be saved over and over again. Sometimes these people simply choose to ignore these verses.

To make matters worse, these folks believe that it is ultimately up to them to keep themselves saved. They also will readily admit that all Christians go through periods of spiritual ‘flatness’ where they don’t feel very close to their Lord and sin in some way after they are saved. They believe that “minor sins” or sins that do not indicate a denial of their relationship with God or cross over some unspecified line of demarcation will be forgiven. However, there is a point at which God revokes their salvation. Thus, they often are tormented over the question as to whether they are still saved at any given time.

The simple facts are that the Bible gives no indication of any line of demarcation past which a Christian loses his salvation. The Bible simply states that “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), and “the soul that sinneth, it shall die.” (Ezekiel 18:20). According to the scriptures, if a man is guilty of his sin at all, he will go to hell. Therefore, since they claim themselves to be guilty of their sins after their salvation (in spite of 1 John 3:9: see page 1) and the wages of sin is death, and they cannot be saved again, it is patently obvious that nobody has any realistic hope of heaven and salvation is a sham.

The real scriptural truth on this subject, however, is that no man is responsible for keeping himself saved. This responsibility, as we have seen, has been laid on the Lord Jesus Christ (John 6:39; 2 Timothy 1:12; Romans 8:31–39). Additionally, since his soul is sealed by the Holy Ghost until the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30), it cannot be touched by sins committed in the body (Romans 7:15–25). Therefore, once a man is saved, there is no way he can lose his salvation. The cause of an improper viewpoint is a lack of understanding of how the body, soul, and spirit are differentiated in the Bible. The body of a saved man sins, but it is primarily a mechanical unit which can be cleaned and rebuilt as a glorified body fit for eternity. The salvation offered by Jesus Christ does not primarily apply to the body. It is the soul that cannot be saved again if it is lost, since it is the part that has been washed in the blood of Christ, justified by the Father, and regenerated by the renewing of the Holy Ghost. The spirit, as we have seen in lesson 8, is never able to sin and so has no culpability. Christians who don't accept eternal security normally presume that sins committed after salvation are charged against the entire trinity of body, soul, and spirit. Their viewpoint is a result of unwarranted assumptions made in lieu of serious Bible study on the issue.

V. The Effects of an Improper View of Eternal Security

A. Effects on those who do not accept eternal security as a doctrine

Some of these people spend too much time wondering if they are currently saved. Since we all sin after we are saved and we all have periods of spiritual flatness or coldness, Christians who do not understand their security are frequently tormented by doubts about their salvation. They believe there is a line of demarcation somewhere that God has neglected to tell us about. If one crosses over it, however inadvertently, they have to get saved all over again. These poor people live in a constant, paralyzing state of self-doubt and fear.

B. Effects on those who accept eternal security as doctrine but have wrong heart attitudes

1. Those who say: "Since I'm saved, I can relax my standards a little"
God will chastise these people

1 Corinthians 11:32; Hebrews 12:5–11

2. Those who say: "Since I'm saved, I can do whatever I want" God will severely chastise those who commit great sins

Acts 5:1–10; 1 Corinthians 11:24–30

VI. The Effects of a Proper View of Eternal Security

- A. We can spend our time growing in the Lord rather than wondering if we are still saved**

Hebrews 5:12–14; Hebrews 6:1–3

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God” (Hebrews 6:1).

- B. Assurance of continuing salvation gives peace, allows the Christian to enjoy Christianity**

Romans 5:10–11; 14:17; Galatians 5:22–23; James 3:17–18

“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost” (Romans 15:13).

- C. A proper viewpoint eliminates the dread of Hebrews 6:4–6 and 10:26–31**

