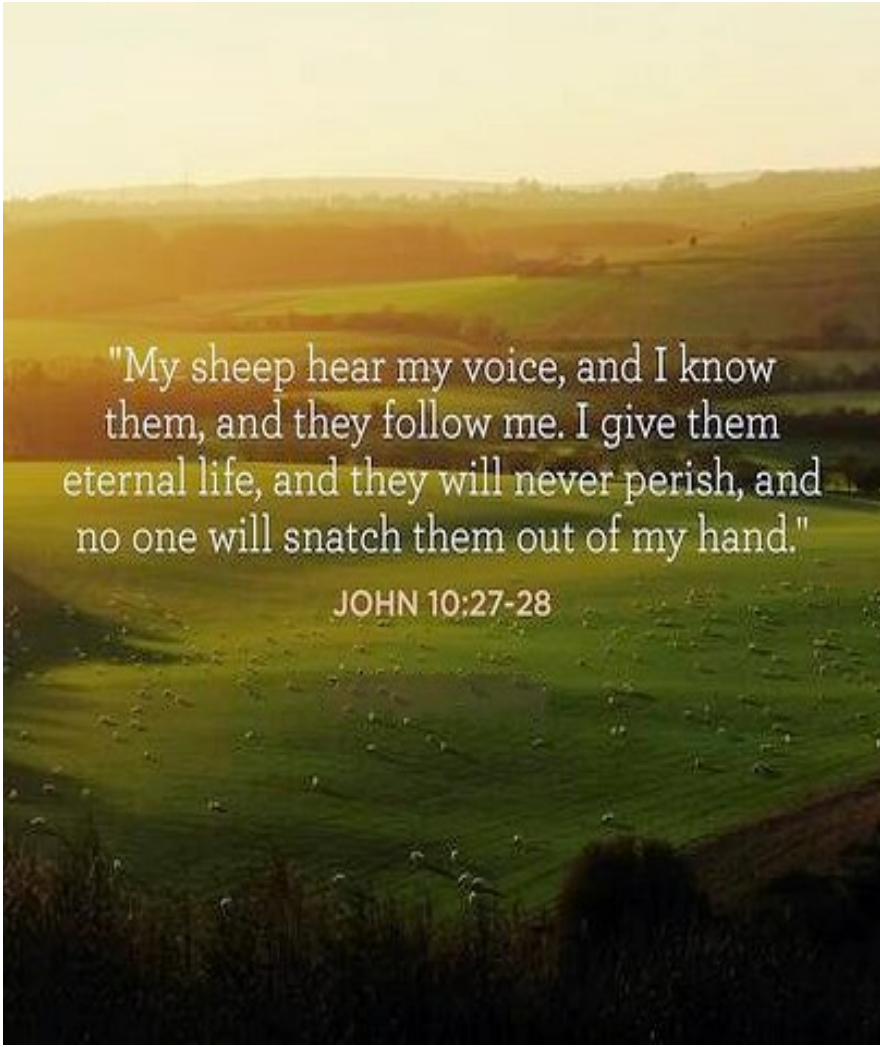


The Christian Life Series—Book 7
**Eternal Security
and Assurance**



"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand."

JOHN 10:27-28

Vistoso Community Church

Foreword

There are two very closely related topics in this publication, both of which will at times bring great comfort to the child of God.

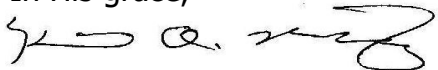
The first is our eternal security, the fact that once an individual has been transferred from the dominion of darkness and

into the Kingdom of the Son, there is no possibility of ever going back. This transfer is an act that was accomplished solely by God, which we neither earned or deserved. Is there anyone who can make Him undo His gracious act? There is not, which means the believer's eternity is a settled matter. It is secure!

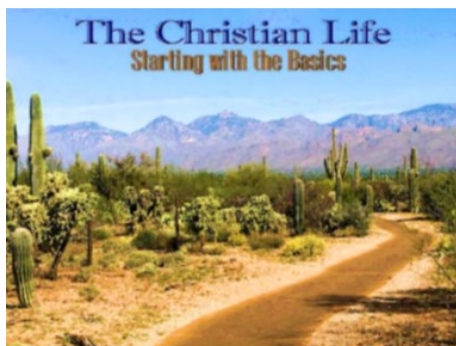
The second topic is the assurance possessed by the individual who knows, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that he or she has eternal life. But who could know such a thing with certainty? Every child of God who is willing to *rest* upon the authority of God's Word! Although there is much confusion in this area, in reality, God intends for every child of God to be *secure* and to have *assurance* with respect to their eternal life!

How can we arrive at this point? Read on and allow the Word of God to settle the issue for you!

In His grace,



Kevin Redig, pastor-teacher

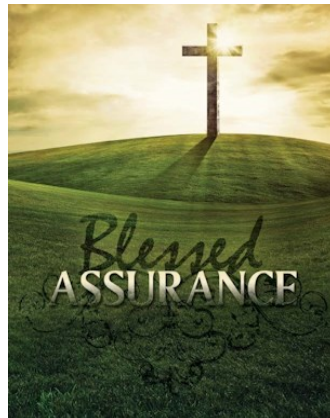


All Scripture quotes have been taken from either the NKJV (1992 edition) or the NIV (1984 edition).

Eternal Security and Assurance

Our focus has been upon the essential elements of God's so -great salvation, those truths into which we must grow in order to progress in the Christian life and in turn live as His ambassadors here on planet earth. We are called Jesus' ambassadors in II Corinthians 5:20, and it is such a helpful and descriptive term. It reminds us that, as His children, heaven is our eternal home and we are just aliens and strangers for as many days as the Lord might give us in His service here on planet earth. (Hebrews 11:13)

Now, in the process of growing and representing our Lord to this lost world, there are times we are going to become discouraged. This may be caused by the trials that come our way or perhaps because of our failure to live up to what we know to be God's calling upon our lives. We know how to recover from failure, and we know how to press forward. Nonetheless, when discouragement does come our way, today's twin subjects of the believer's eternal security and the believer's assurance are going to be very encouraging.



In a slight change from our previous studies, today's topics are not so much in contrast with each other as they are sequential. In other words, once we understand the truth of our eternal security, it is very natural to move right on to an understanding of why we should have absolute assurance of our salvation. I trust you will be blessed and encouraged by the reality of these two foundational truths which are an essential part of God's salvation for us.

So let's begin.

Our Salvation Is Secure

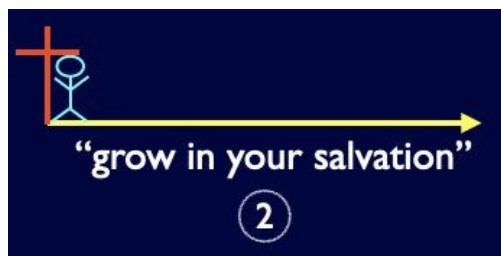
The *security* of the believer's salvation is a question that is typically raised with respect to the first phase of our salvation. By the first phase I simply mean the time when a person is saved from an eternal destiny in hell to one in God's heaven as the result of receiving God's gift of eternal life. For example, this Scripture refers to the first phase of salvation:

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16



The question then becomes: "Once I have believed and received God's gift of eternal life, is there anything I can do to lose it?" This question is being asked from the perspective of a saved person.

Let's shift our focus to the second phase of our salvation—the Christian Life in time. The question is: "Can a child of God do something to lose their salvation? Is there some failure on my part in terms of living the Christian Life that can cause me to lose the gift I had received from God, that is my eternal salvation?" Before we go about answering this most important question, let's make sure we realize what is really being asked. If we recall some of the content from our earlier studies, what is really being asked is



this: "Can I lose my position in Christ, and would that include my imputed righteousness, my union with Christ, and my acceptance in Christ?" It is also

asking: "As the result of some failing on my part, can I lose my family standing?" In essence, the question is: "Can I become not a child of God after becoming one?" I hope that by framing the questions this way, you should already be thinking, "My, that would take some doing—especially considering I didn't do anything to earn or deserve these blessings in the first place!"

The Scriptures Promise Security!

So, let me make a definitive statement, and then we will go to work to defend it from the Scriptures.

Those things, that God in grace gives to those who believe in the person and work of Christ, are eternally secure. They cannot ever be lost. Specifically God will never withdraw eternal life, one's acceptance in Christ, and one's family status as a child of God! These are eternal grace gifts from God.

The *security* of our salvation has as its source the grace of God. It is an eternal possession of every born-again child of God. It can be supported at three levels.

The First Level. The first level of support for eternal security is the implied quality of what has been given, that is how long the life we receive lasts? Read again John 3:16:

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

What word is used to describe the duration of the life we receive? It is the word *eternal*!! If it could be lost, or if it were dependent upon certain things we might do or not do, wouldn't it have been more accurately labeled temporary life or conditional life? Did God make a mistake in John 3:16? Or, have we simply failed to take Him at the very clear and straightforward nature of His Word? And this is not an argument for eternal security based only on a

single verse. Over and over again what God offers to those who respond in belief to the person and work of His Son is the gift of a life that is declared to be eternal in quality. Notice both belief and the forever nature of the life Jesus offers in His touching dialogue with Martha after the physical death of her brother Lazarus:

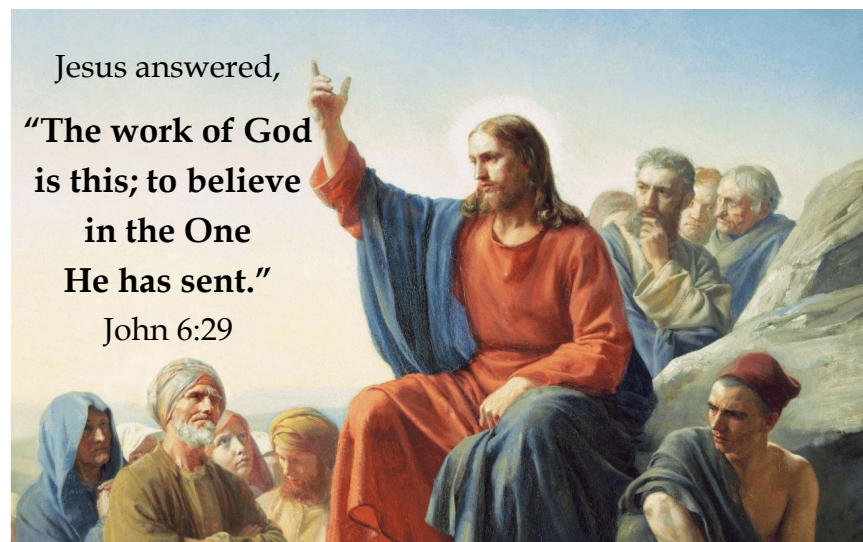
"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"
John 11:25-26

What is Martha being challenged to do? Believe! And, what is at stake is eternal life beyond even physical death.

The Second Level. The second level of support for eternal security digs deeper into grammar and language. Think carefully about what these three verses are declaring to us.

"I told you that you would die in your sins if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be. . ."
John 8:24

"The work of God is this; to believe in the One He has sent."
John 6:29



"I tell you the truth, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." John 5:24

If we do not respond to the person and work of Christ—in faith—then there is no possibility of salvation. Further, it is clear from the first two verses that there is one, and only one, response that God is looking for when considering the person and work of Jesus—belief!

John 5:24 is going to require closer analysis. If we *hear* what Jesus is saying and respond in belief, then notice what happens:

- We have eternal life!
- We will not be condemned!
- We will have crossed over from death to life!

What kind of life do we have? It is a life that lasts forever. Further, there is no condemnation in our future.

But what about if we do something bad—really bad? We still have life that lasts forever. Although we may be disciplined by our heavenly Father, we will not come under eternal condemnation. Is that not exactly what the verse says? Most interesting of all, we will have *crossed over* from death to life! The phrase *crossed over* is a verb in the Greek text, and it is in the perfect tense. This is the form used to convey a one-time occurrence that does not need to be repeated. This is the form used to convey something that has happened in the past (at the point of belief) with results that continue right up until the present. In short, if you have placed your faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ, you have once and for all crossed over from death to life! You have changed kingdoms from the dominion of Satan to the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. This is a one-time event that can not be undone and does not ever need to be repeated.

You may *feel* strongly about what *should* happen for certain failings on the part of a professed believer. It doesn't matter how strong your feelings (or logic) might be. It only matters what the Word of God has to say. The Word of God says that He is calling us to believe in the person and work of His Son and, if we do, we have made a transition from death to life that is a one-time event. Further, the results of that transition continue forever. There is no going back.

To make this clearer still, let's consider another passage.



**No one can snatch
them out of MY hand**

"My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; * no one can snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of My Father's hand. I and the Father are one."**

John 10:27-30

On the face of it, this passage is very clear. If

you respond to Jesus' call to believe, you have life that lasts forever, so naturally you cannot perish. Further, no one can snatch you away from the combined efforts of the Son and Father—two sovereign and omnipotent members of the Trinity. You would think that would settle the issue—the believer in Jesus Christ is secure!

But wait, there is more. At the place where I have put the asterisks, there is an untranslated phrase. Presumably the translators left it out because of the awkward phraseology

when translated into English. Basically what Jesus is saying is this:

**I give them eternal life. . .they shall never perish. . .
not unto the very end of the ages. . .**

This is about as clear and as definitive as it can be. But, there is always someone who asks, "What if I decide to take myself out of the hands that hold me eternally secure? What if I choose, as someone who at one time believed, to walk away?" The text still says you have eternal life unto the very end of the ages and can therefore never perish! No one can snatch a saved person out of the combined hands of the Son and the Father, and that includes the saved child of God snatching themselves out!

We certainly do come up with silly hypotheticals at times. Can we make our lives miserable as children of God—spending it in a *far distant land* as the Prodigal Son did? We most certainly can! But the entire time we are doing this, we are still in the hands of the Son and the Father. Can we suffer all manner of discipline? Of course! We should expect to do so, much more so than a lost person, for the explicit reason that we are children of God!

Third Level. Then there is a third level at which we can understand our eternal security—and this one takes into account the nature and capability of our God! To set the stage, let me ask the question, "Whose faithfulness is at issue when it comes to the permanence of our salvation—ours or God's?"

. . .if we are faithless, He will remain faithful, for He cannot disown Himself. II Timothy 2:13

It is God's salvation, it is received according to His terms, and it is maintained by His faithfulness! When understood in this manner, we should be able to come to the same conclusion as so clearly stated in the above text: Our salvation doesn't depend upon our faithfulness, but His. For this

very reason, even if we at some point should become faithless and hope to God it is only a temporary condition, He will not disown us! For if we have believed in Christ, we have become His child, we have become united to Christ, we have His life. Therefore, His character, in terms of His faithfulness, will keep Him from ever disowning the least child of God!

Your Security Is Irrefutable

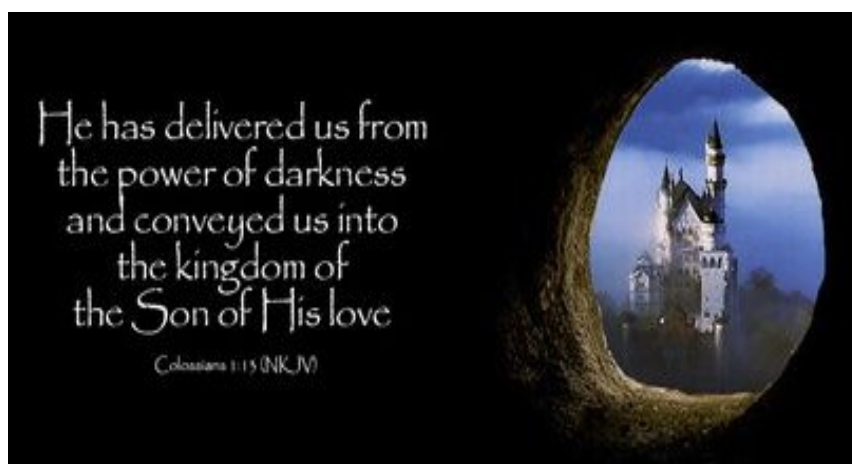
This brings us to what I consider to be an absolutely irrefutable argument supporting the ironclad security of the one who has trusted in Jesus Christ unto eternal life. Consider these two passages in tandem:

“But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. . . how can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house.” Matthew 12:25-29

For He has rescued us out of the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:13-14

The passage in Matthew’s Gospel are the words of Jesus in response to the grievous accusation from the Pharisees that Jesus was casting out demons by the power of Satan himself. Jesus, to the contrary, declares that He casts out demons by first binding Satan. Satan is the strong man bound by the Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus then plunders Satan’s *house* by casting out his demon servants from those who have been afflicted.

The second passage speaks of something to which I alluded earlier. Whenever a person has placed his or her faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ—there is a *kingdom transfer* that has occurred. Satan has lost one of his subjects! The believing individual is forever transferred from



the dominion of darkness (Satan's kingdom) into the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

By application of the passage in Matthew, this can occur because the work of Christ has bound Satan such that his kingdom can be plundered. This saved person has *crossed over* from one kingdom to another! Consider what would have to happen for Satan to get one of his subjects back? Why, the Lord Jesus would have to be bound so that Satan could plunder His kingdom. That's heresy of the highest order!

The Lord Jesus Christ will never be bound—and most certainly not by Satan! Therefore those in His kingdom will never be plundered! Mark it down upon the authority of God's Word. The least child of God is most certainly eternally secure unto the end of the ages!

In Summary

The child of God has good reason to be confident—exactly as the Scriptures declare that he or she should be:

**I know whom I have believed, and am convinced
that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to
Him for that day.**

II Timothy 1:12

In context, the II Timothy passage is speaking of present persecution in which the believer should continue to be confident of a glorious eternal future. You see, there are all manner of things that can cause unbelief:

- How could God let me be persecuted like this—is my eternal home still secure?
- I have failed God again—is my eternal home still secure?
- Things are not turning out like I thought they would—is my eternal home still secure?

The answer to any such question, upon the authority of God's Word, is an unchanging and resounding YES, if we have met the one condition for eternal life. Of course, we all realize that the one condition is faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. God wants us to know this. He wants us to be sure! He gives us assurance so that, as we deal with the many challenges that are sure to come our way in this life, the one thing that we are not questioning is whether or not we still have the gift of eternal life that He has promised to all who believe.



You Have Assurance

And that brings us to our second topic—the believer’s *Assurance of Salvation*.

Assurance Defined

As a term related to our salvation, to have assurance is to have a settled conviction that one is an eternally-saved child of God. It is knowing with certainty that you are saved, with an eternal home in heaven. This wonderful assurance is based upon the unchanging nature of God’s promises and not the variability of one’s personal walk. And, as a corollary, eternal security is the understanding that once obtained, eternal life can never be lost.

I trust that you are grasping the nature of the distinction between our eternal security and our assurance. The eternal security of the believer is a divine fact, whether we know it or not—whether we believe it or not. Assurance is knowing, as a settled conviction, that we are eternally saved, and by extension, eternally secure!

Having assurance is not indicative of arrogance. It is the result of humbly taking God at His Word.

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life. . .I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

I John 5:11-13

It is not uncommon for those who have been untaught on these topics to say, “No one can know for sure if they are going to heaven!” If we dare to disagree with this statement, it is equally common to be charged with arrogance. But, what says the Word of God? It answers this very issue in a very direct and concise way: If you have the Son of God, you have eternal life.

How do you get the Son? You get the Son and His eternal life by believing in who He is and what He has done. If you have believed, then you are **to know** that you have eternal life. This is God's will for every child of God! He has done this intentionally so there would be no doubt! He does not want us to have a *hope-so salvation*; on the contrary, we are to have a *know-so salvation*!

Jesus' Ministry Settles the Question

If you have any doubts at all about your salvation and eternal life, they should be settled by the ongoing ministry of Jesus on our behalf!

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.

I John 2:1

Therefore He is able to save completely (to the uttermost) **those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them.**

Hebrews 7:25

The thing that most commonly causes one's assurance to waiver is sin in the life. This is not surprising since sin can cause us to lose our job, sever relationships, and have all sorts of other negative consequences on the human level. When it comes to the vertical, we most certainly can receive discipline from the Lord for sin in our lives. But, what about our eternal destiny and what about our assurance of that destiny? To answer that, let's ask: "What is Jesus doing if and when sin occurs in our lives?" I John tells us that such sin is always undesirable; but should it happen, Jesus steps forward to speak on our behalf! He does so as the sinless, righteous One who has already paid for every one of our sins. When this Advocate steps forward to speak on our behalf, do you suppose the Father is satisfied? Of course He is, for He has already honored the Son for the sufficiency of His work on the cross. Jesus declared, "It is finished", our sin was paid for in full.

To believe otherwise is a heresy against the sufficiency of Christ's work at the cross—and we dare not go there! Just how long is this intercessory ministry of Jesus on our behalf going to go on? The passage in Hebrews makes clear the answer—every single day we are on this earth. That is one of the reasons we can be saved to the uttermost.

Even through our struggles with sin, we have a Savior who always intercedes on our behalf! He is not our Savior only on those days when we think our walk with the Lord is going well. He is also our Savior on the stormy days when, if we will let them, our failures will loom larger than anything else. Instead, what should loom largest in our thinking is our Advocate interceding with the Father on our behalf. He is our great High Priest who continually represents us before God.

We know what to do when we sin—confess it! Now we know something else we should do! We should also give



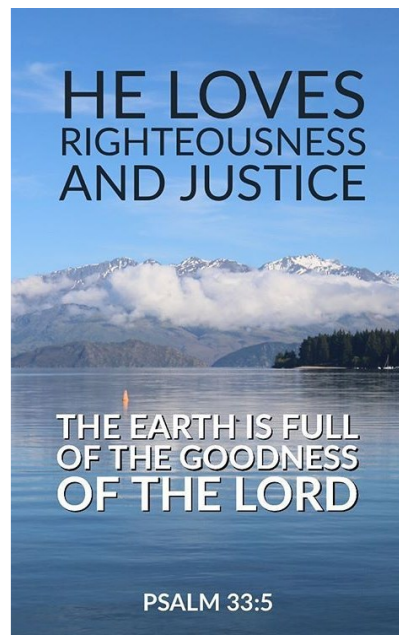
thanks for a Savior who always intercedes with the Father on our behalf and can, therefore, save us to the uttermost! It is this assurance, coupled with our confession of sin, that minimizes the impact of any sin in our lives. If, on the other hand, we allow sin in our lives to entangle us in wondering about the security of our salvation and how God feels about us now, we have given guilt and uncertainty a completely unwarranted victory in our lives.

A Matter of Trust in God

Our assurance should also be a matter of trusting in the character of God!

**Righteousness and justice
are the foundation of Your
throne, love and mercy go
before You.** Psalm 89:14

As a lost sinner, I interacted with the love and mercy of God. I learned that it was the Christ's love that caused Him to go to the cross in my place, bearing my sin. His mercy called my name, and I placed my faith in Him, as the Son of God, and in His work on my behalf. In doing so, I received God's gracious gift of eternal life. What was necessary for this gift to be made available to me? The gift had to be in keeping with the righteousness and justice of God—for they are the very foundation of who He is! Every aspect of God's so-great salvation was in keeping with, not just His love, but His righteousness and justice! God's justice was poured out upon Christ at the cross and His righteousness was satisfied by the penalty paid by our Savior.



How do we know this? Following His finished work, God raised Jesus to the place of greatest honor in the universe—His right hand! Now connect the dots with me. If the justice and righteousness of God have been satisfied with the expression of His love and mercy in Jesus, then how could we not have assurance? The answer is because we are looking at ourselves and realize that we are unworthy! Listen, we were unworthy of God's salvation in the first place. We will continue to be unworthy as children of God. Our only *claim to fame* is our association with Christ.

When it comes to our assurance, we need to get our eyes off of self, and on to the truth that the mercy of God as expressed to us in Christ. Our assurance is based upon the satisfaction of His righteousness and justice by the finished work of Christ. It doesn't depend upon us. It depends upon Him! We are unworthy, but thank God we are now associated with the ultimately worthy One! Our assurance is not an issue of our sin, but our association with the Son! Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Doubts about the security of our eternal life or with respect to assurance indicate a failure in terms of the focus of our thinking:

*What is it that looms larger in our thinking—
our failures or the complete sufficiency of the cross of
Christ in dealing with our sin! Is our assurance
to be dependent upon our walk and works,
or Christ's completed and approved work?*

I am not saying it is always easy to hold fast to our assurance at the point we are deeply discouraged by our failures, but, at this point, the truth as we have seen from God's Word should be shining through. The cross of Christ is sufficient to deal with sin. Jesus Himself pronounced it *Paid in full!* (John 19:30) To doubt the efficacy of the cross is to slander our perfect Savior. You see, our assurance

must never come from what we do, it must be based upon what Christ has already done! This is the only basis for assurance, and we must always come back to it. Our assurance is a sure anchor for our spiritual lives that will never fail.

In Closing

Now by way of closing, let's see if we can put our eternal security and assurance into the context of living a life that is pleasing to the Lord and brings Him glory.

What About When We Fail?

What about when we fail in our Christian walk—either through overt sin, or a failure to do those things we know we should be doing? What then?

First, understand that neither the believer's eternal security or assurance is any reason to ignore failure. Failure is indicative of one or more of the following:

- A lack of faith
- A lack of knowing the truth
- A lack of spiritual maturity
- A misplaced reliance upon self

All of these need to be addressed in the life of a believer. Just to be absolutely clear, the truths of eternal security and assurance would be grossly misused if they were taken as a reason to ignore or cover up such failings. Further, failure affects what should be so precious to us—fellowship with our heavenly Father. Therefore, our failures need to be addressed via confession of sin as soon as possible.

But don't overlook the fact that, although our failures do not affect our salvation or assurance, those failures leave us eligible for discipline from the hand of our heavenly Father. That is most certainly another reason to address

The failure problem by appropriating what God has provided to address sin and to allow us to continue to grow in grace and knowledge.

Is It a Settled Matter?

Since the children of God are eternally secure and have assurance of their salvation, is that reason enough to consider the Christian Life a settled matter and turn away to live as we please? Of course not, and here's why:

- To turn away from the Voice of the Lord is to choose the same course of action and consequences as was chosen by the Exodus generation. What was the outcome for them? It is summed up in the phrase ***"died in the wilderness"***! (Hebrews 3:7-1) This is a spiritual outcome that we most certainly want to avoid.



- Then consider this ominous message from Galatians:
Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Galatians 6:7-9

The quality of the life lived by the believer in time is not related to their eternal security; it is related to whether or not the soul is under the influence of the flesh or the Spirit. This should be an easy choice for every one of us, for it is the difference between a life of spiritual abundance and the Prodigal Son *eating slop with the pigs in a far distant land*.

- The consequences of not dealing with sin is the reason the thrust of the New Testament epistles is so strongly cautionary in tone. They are not letters to lost people in the hope they might get saved. On the contrary, they are letters to saved people with the express intent of guiding them into what to do, while at the same time cautioning them about what to avoid.

Trying to manipulate the grace blessing of eternal security into a *live as you please* lifestyle is most certainly one of the things to avoid. For, if we think the grace of God can be manipulated in such a self-serving way, then we still have a lot to learn about the holiness of God and the length of His reach. Those lessons are best not learned the hard way. It is much easier if we learn our lessons on living the Christian Life from the Scriptures rather than having God reach in and teach us directly in our own lives.

How Does This Work in My Life?

So, how do I properly place these two encouraging doctrines into the Christian Life? How do eternal security and assurance help me to live a God-honoring life in keeping with the fundamentals of the faith we have been learning?

Perhaps an illustration from the sporting world will help make this clear. Many sports have their own specialized footwear. Can you picture the baseball batter *digging in* at the plate, or the soccer player planting his foot prior to a shot on goal? The players' cleats are meant to give them a



firm foundation from which to pursue success. In the same way, to be eternally secure and to have assurance of our salvation, are meant to be the sure foundation from which we pursue success in the Christian Life.

When we fail in the Christian Life—and we all most certainly do—we are not meant to waste even one precious second wondering where we stand with God, worrying about how to make it up to Him, or wallowing in guilt. We stand eternally secure in Christ! We can not make it up to Him because we had nothing to bring to the table regarding our salvation in the first place. Further, guilt is not the answer for one who has been cleansed from all unrighteousness.

In contrast, knowing that we have been eternally saved and are completely accepted *in the Beloved* is meant to be cause to promptly and regularly confess sin and regain our fellowship with the One in whom we have eternal life. You see, our assurance is not related to what we do; it is based solely upon what God has done. Neither our receipt of salvation nor our ongoing efforts to redeem the time God has given us are from the source of self. They are the

ongoing work of the one who saved us from hell to heaven and is willing to save every day unto His glory.

It is no wonder that Paul could say:

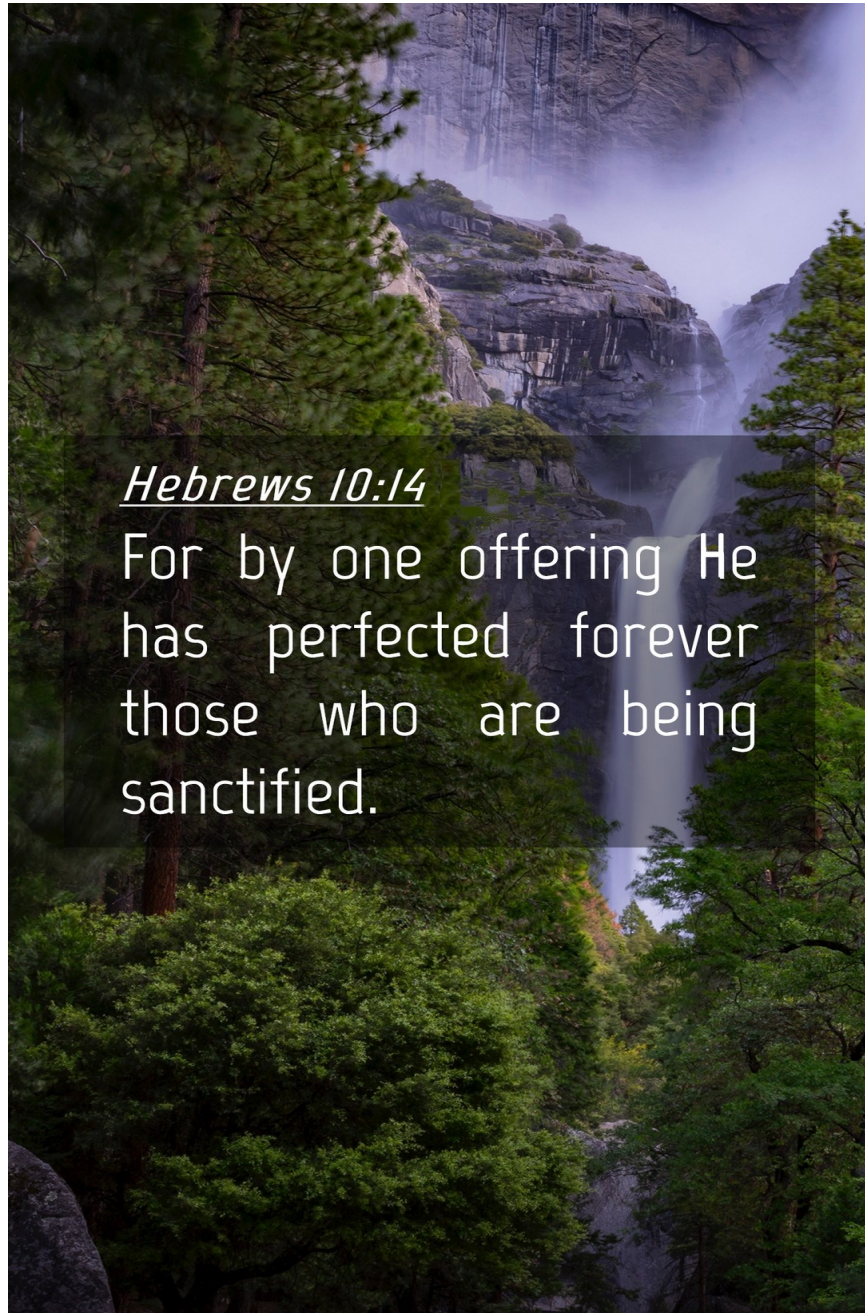
Not that I have already obtained all of this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:12-14

Paul had a checkered past, and even as an apostle he is clear to acknowledge he has *not yet arrived*. Yet notice how steadfastly he is pressing on!

Let me suggest that there is no *forgetting what is behind*, there is no regular appropriation of God's provision of confession for sin, unless our eternal destiny is a settled issue and we know where we stand with respect to our salvation. This needs to be the case on good days and bad—for we are going to have plenty of both! Our heavenly Father wants us to know, He has made it abundantly clear—the child of God is eternally secure and meant to know so!

May God bless you as you pursue your heavenly calling, wasting not one minute in doubt about things so clearly revealed in God's Word.



Hebrews 10:14

For by one offering He
has perfected forever
those who are being
sanctified.

VISTOSO



Community Church

He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit...*John 15:5*

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