

Foundations: Bible Truths for Christian Growth

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Does being a Christian mean that you will never sin again? If you commit a sin, are you still saved? Do you need to be saved again each time you sin?

These are important questions, and the Bible gives clear answers.

The Bible teaches time and time again that once you are a Christian, you are eternally secure—that is, you cannot lose your salvation. As it is often stated, “once saved, always saved.” Work through this study to find out what the Bible says about Christians, sin and eternal security.

The Bible teaches that the salvation you received at the moment you repented of your sins and trusted in Christ is irrevocable. This vital doctrine is called *eternal security*. Once you have been saved from sin by grace and through faith, you are eternally secure. You cannot be lost. Eternal security is indeed a “foundational” doctrine, and it is supported by the entirety of Scripture.

When you trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, a lot of things changed, and they changed permanently. You were hopeless and lost before you trusted Christ, but now...

You are Saved by Grace

Ephesians 2:8–9 were discussed in Chapter 1 regarding your salvation. They apply also to your security. Verse 8 states that you “**are**” saved by grace—not “were.” It is a *present tense* verb, indicating that the salvation which you received by

grace—God’s *undeserved favor*—you continue in by grace.

Amazing Grace!

John Newton wrote the following words in his hymn,
Amazing Grace :

*“Tis grace that brought be safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.”*

You became saved by Christ’s work, not your own.
Similarly, you remain saved by Christ’s work, not your
own.

Read **Galatians 3:3**. How did you enter God’s family—by faith (“the Spirit”) or your own effort (“the flesh”)? _____

So how will you remain in God’s family and mature (what the Bible describes as “being perfected”)—by faith or by your own effort? _____

You are in God’s Family

Read **John 1:12–13**. What privilege (or “right”) did Jesus give you when you received Him as your Savior? _____

What strict qualification must you meet to enter into Christ’s kingdom, according to **John 3:3**? _____

Nicodemus had a good question in the next verse: “How can a man be born twice?” Jesus explained what it means to be “born again” in **John 3:5–7**. Your first birth was physical. When did that happen?

Your *second* birth was spiritual. When did that happen? _____

When you received Jesus Christ, you became a child of God—you were born into His family! God is your Heavenly Father!

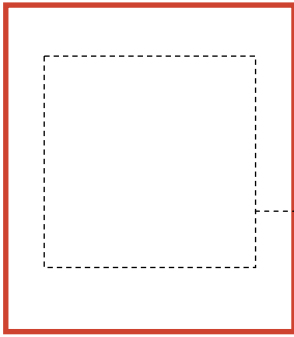
Is the parent–child relationship temporary or permanent? _____

Once you become God’s child, you are His child forever. Here’s an illustration:

- As you grew up, did you ever make your father or mother angry by disobeying them? _____
When you did, were you still their child? _____

You still had a *relationship* with them—you didn’t have to go to the courthouse downtown and become adopted! You are their child regardless of what you do. Your relationship was unchanged, but your *fellowship* was broken—you weren’t as close as you had been. The same is true of your relationship with your Heavenly Father. When you sin, you are still His child—that’s your ***relationship***. But you aren’t close to Him—that’s your broken ***fellowship***.

Perhaps a picture will help explain:



Your **Relationship** with God:

- *permanent*
- *unbreakable*
- *determines your eternal destiny*

Your **Fellowship** with God:

- *dependent on obedience*
- *breakable*
- *determines daily joy*

You have a relationship with God—you became part of His family the moment you were saved. You are secure in Him! Though your sin hurts your fellowship with God, your relationship as His child is eternal and unchanging.

You are in Christ

The Bible teaches that when you trust Jesus as your Savior you gain a new position: you are *in Christ*. You are intimately joined to Christ. Since you are in Christ, you have the same position and privileges before God that Christ does!

Romans 8:1 says that since you are “in Christ” you will not face _____. That means that you will not be condemned for your sins. Christ already paid for them!

1 Corinthians 15:22 says that though you were dead before salvation, in Christ you have been _____.

2 Corinthians 5:17 says that you are a _____

The second half of the verse lists the practical results of your new birth. What are they? _____

Romans 5:1 says that when you put your faith in Christ as your Savior you were “justified.” That means that at that moment God *declared you to be righteous*. **Romans 4:11, 23–24** teaches that at the moment of salvation, Jesus’ righteousness was “imputed” to you—it was *counted for your credit*. Although you continue to struggle with sin (in your *practice*), God now sees you as being as righteous as Jesus Christ (in your *position*). Why? Because you are in Christ!

As good as done!

Romans 8:30 uses several words to describe God’s work of salvation on your behalf. One of them is “glorified,” and it describes the condition of those in heaven who are free from sin, disease and death. The verse says that God has already glorified you (past tense). In other words, in God’s eyes your salvation and glorification in heaven are so certain that He describes it as already having occurred!

You are eternally secure!

You are Kept by the Power of God

Throughout church history, the matter of eternal security has been addressed from two different perspectives:

1. **Perseverance** is the teaching that genuine believers will all persevere until they are with Christ in heaven. Read **1 John 2:19**. It teaches that those who don’t

“persevere” do not lose their salvation. Rather, they prove that they *never were* believers.

2. **Preservation** is an even stronger argument. Its focus is not on the Christian, but on God Himself. It is the teaching that God will preserve all who are genuinely saved. According to **1 Peter 1:5**, you do not keep your salvation by human effort. Rather you are “*protected by the _____ of _____.*”

Read **John 6:37–40**. Christ teaches that He will not lose any that the Father has given him. Similarly, Paul says in **2 Timothy 1:12** that He knows that Christ is able to “keep” the thing committed to him until His return—Paul’s salvation. Now read **Jude 24**. It teaches that God is “*able to _____ you from _____, and to present you faultless*” in heaven. The question is not whether you could lose your salvation...it is whether God could lose you!

Were it up to you to keep yourself saved you would be in trouble. Thankfully, God has made “keeping” you Christ’s responsibility. You are perfectly secure!

Read **John 10:27–29**. In verse 27, what does Jesus call those who have received Him as their Savior?

How do saved people prove that they belong to Him (v. 27)? _____

Jesus gives 3 promises in verse 28. What are they?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What promise does Jesus make in verse 29? _____

Is God *able* to keep you? _____ Is He *willing*? _____

What important promise did Jesus make in **John 6:37**? _____

You are in God's Love

Romans 8:35–39 are comforting verses for the Christian. What question is asked in verse 35? _____

What difficulties are mentioned in verse 35–36? _____

What answer is given in verse 37? _____

List all of the things in verse 38–39 that *cannot* separate us from God's love. _____

Jeremiah 31:3 describes God's love as "everlasting." What does that mean? _____

Can you lose your salvation? Only if God stops loving you, and Scripture says that is impossible.

God's Spirit is in You

So far, we have learned that you are saved by grace, in God's family, in Christ, kept by the power of God

and in His love. Scripture also teaches that God is in you! Read **1 Corinthians 6:19–20**. What does it call you? _____

In the Old Testament, God lived in the Tabernacle (a portable, tent-like place of worship). He later lived in the Temple, the permanent place of worship in Jerusalem. Of course, God is everywhere (*omnipresent*), but the Tabernacle and Temple were His special dwelling places among His people. Now, God's special dwelling place is in His people...including you!

Some people believe that the Holy Spirit lives only in obedient Christians, but the Bible teaches that He lives in all Christians. Read **1 Corinthians 3:1**. How does God describe the people in the church of Corinth? _____

Though saved, the Corinthian Christians were disobedient. Yet, just 15 verses later, God calls them the “temple of God.” Do you lose the Holy Spirit and your salvation when you sin? _____

Read **Ephesians 1:13–14**. Verse 14 says that the Holy Spirit is the “pledge of our inheritance.” When you purchase a home you make a down payment or *pledge*. What does the pledge signify? _____

In the same way, God gave His Spirit to you as a pledge—it is His promise that he will complete the transaction. You are assured that your eternity in heaven (inheritance) is settled. In fact, verse 13 says that you have been “sealed” by the Spirit, like a letter whose contents are secure.

God's Life is in You

Throughout Scripture God promises life to those who have received Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Have you repented of your sin and asked Jesus to be your Savior? _____

If so, **John 5:24** is one of God's many promises to you. What does it promise? _____

According to Scripture, those who trust in Christ have eternal life (**John 3:16, 36**). Eternal life does not become yours when you die—you have it now if you've trusted Christ.

You are a New Creature

This point is an important safeguard of the doctrine of eternal security. Some who criticize this teaching argue that it might lead to a life of sin because the Christian has no fear of losing his salvation. Such belief that eternal security is “dangerous” is based in reason, not Scripture. Charles Spurgeon responded aptly to this groundless charge: *“The question is, is it in the Bible? If it is there let none of us ever say it is dangerous.”*²

In **2 Corinthians 5:17**, Paul states that the Christian is a “_____.” The results of the new birth are evident in everyday life as “*the old things* _____; *behold, _____ things have come.*” A genuine believer doesn't want to sin! He has no

² *Spurgeon's Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), vol. X.

desire to return to the bondage from which Christ delivered him. Does your life demonstrate that type of change? _____

It is true that there are some who claim to be saved, yet continue in sin without consequence or regret.

What about them?

1 **John 2:19** provides the answer. Those who appear to fall away “*went out from us, but they were really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.*” Those who

continue in sin with no sign of “new-creature living” are not saved, nor have they lost their salvation.

Rather, they ***never were saved***. Indeed, John teaches that true Christians will “no doubt continue.” That’s the perseverance of the saints!

Scripture teaches that true believers are indeed secure in Christ—secure to obey, not to sin. The true believer walks in obedience, but he is not motivated by fear (like those who believe they can lose their salvation).

Fear or Love?

*“There is nothing like a belief in my eternal perseverance, and the immutability of my Father’s affection, which can keep me near to Him from a motive of simple gratitude.”*³ This fact is proven throughout church history. Many of the most devout Christians—from the Apostle Paul to the conscientious Puritans—believed wholeheartedly in the security of the believer.

³ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, “A Defense of Calvinism” in *A Great Heritage of Evangelical Teaching* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), p. 928.

Rather, he is motivated by love for his gracious Savior. The difference is life-changing!

Fact, Faith & Feeling

There may be times when you don't *feel* saved. Such lack of assurance⁴ may be caused by sin which you've allowed to be part of your life. It may be Satan's attempt to discourage you. Whatever the cause of doubt, you must remember that your salvation is not based on how you *feel*. It is based on the *facts* of God's Word. Your responsibility is to respond to God in *faith* based on Bible *fact* regardless of how you *feel*.

The facts are that you are saved by grace. You are now in God's family. You are in Christ. You are in God's hand and love. His Spirit and life are in you. You are a new creature. God has promised that He won't cast you out.

What do we learn about God from **Titus 1:2**? _____

How does that description of God prove you cannot lose your salvation? _____

The belief that you can lose your salvation—one point of a theology called *Arminianism*—is not a

⁴ It is important to distinguish the objective and unchanging security of the believer with subjective assurance of salvation. **Assurance** refers to your confidence and certainty that you are saved. Although assurance of salvation is important and grounded in Scriptural teaching (such as Romans 8:16), **security** is based in objective fact, not subjective experience.

minor issue. It is believed by millions. Its implications for individuals are obvious. However, its implications for Bible doctrine are also great. The stakes are very high:

1. This false teaching has a low view of salvation.

It teaches that you receive eternal life by grace, but keep it by works (contrary to **Galatians 3:2–3**). In reality, it amounts to works salvation. The result of such teaching is the pride condemned in **Ephesians 2:9**.

2. This false teaching has a low view of sin.

Many who teach that you lose your salvation by sin also teach—of necessity—that it is possible to live a life entirely free from sin (contrary to all of Scripture and the experience of the Apostle Paul in **Romans 7**). To justify the belief that one can be sinless, they often redefine or minimize sin. They boast of not being drunkards,

adulterers or liars, but they neglect sins of the heart such as anger, pride and lust. No one who

*“If ever it should come to pass
That sheep of Christ could fall away,
My fickle, feeble soul, alas,
Would fall a thousand times a day.”*

C. H. Spurgeon ⁵

correctly understands the holiness of God would presume to be called sinless himself.

3. This false teaching has a low view of God.

It teaches that God would bestow a gift, then change His mind (contrary to **Romans 11:29**). It teaches that He would exact punishment for one sinner two times

⁵*Spurgeon’s Sermons*, vol. X, p. 23.

(contrary to **Hebrews 1:3** and **1 Peter 3:18**). It makes him fickle.

Read **Malachi 3:6**. Here God states the reason why He did not “consume” (or *destroy*) Israel, though they certainly deserved it. What reason does He give for His continuing mercy?

“For I, the LORD, do not _____.”

God’s preservation of His people had more to do with His character than theirs. Similarly, your security as a Christian does not rest in your performance. Instead, it rests in the unchanging Word of God and character of God.

4. This false teaching has a low view of Christ.

It teaches that although He died for sin, His death is inadequate to pay for all sins (contrary to **1 John 1:7**) and insufficient to satisfy God’s justice (contrary to **1 John 2:1–2** and **Isaiah 53:11**).

John 19:30 tells of Christ’s sixth cry from the cross. It was a declaration of victory: “*It is _____!*” That glorious phrase comes from one single Greek word: *tetelestai*.⁶ It is a word used to describe a payment or purchase, and it means that the account in question has been paid in full. So Christ

⁶ Grammatically, *tetelestai* is a **perfect passive indicative**. Though that fact may seem like a technicality, it is very important for the following reasons:

- The **perfect tense** means that it “has been” finished. It happened in the past, but its results continue today.
- The **passive voice** means that our salvation was accomplished by someone else. Christ finished it, not us!
- The **indicative mood** means that it is a certainty, not merely a possibility.

paid in full for your sins. No more payment is required. *It is finished.* For God to require two payments (one by Christ and one by you) would be unjust.

Consider this: When Christ died for your sins nearly 2000 years ago, how many sins had you committed?

All of your sins were yet in the future, including those you committed yesterday, today, and even tomorrow. Yet, according to **1 John 1:7**, how many of them are washed away by Christ's blood (even those you have not yet committed)? _____

In the words of Charles Wesley, *“Love’s redeeming work is done, Hallelujah! Fought the fight, the battle won, Hallelujah!”*

Finally, **1 John 2:1** contains a very strong proof of eternal security, and it is found in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Although God's desire is that you “not sin,” He has also provided an “Advocate” or representative for us when we sin. Who is it? _____

Furthermore, Christ is called the “propitiation” for our sins in 1John 2:2. That means that He has already satisfied God's wrath on our sin by dying on the cross. As stated earlier, Christ bore God's punishment for your sins...even those you have yet to commit.

Conclusion

It is essential that you put the issue of eternal security to rest. Be certain that you have indeed trusted Christ. Make sure that your lifestyle indicates the change befitting a “new creature.” Compare your life with the fruits of a Christian listed in **1 John**. In the words of **2 Peter 1:10**, *“be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you.”* Lewis Sperry Chafer provides this warning: the Bible offers *“no divine promise of keeping for the mere professor who does not truly believe.”*⁷

Once you have placed your faith in Christ alone, rest in Him. As long as you doubt your salvation, your insecurity will prohibit you from growing or serving. Take God at His word and stand secure in the promise of **1 Peter 1:5**—you are “protected by the power of God.” Move past your doubts and get busy!

Secure to Serve

*“During initial construction on the Golden Gate Bridge, no safety devices were used and 23 men fell to their deaths. For the final part of the project, however, a large net was used as a safety precaution. At least 10 men fell into it and were saved from certain death. Even more interesting, however, is the fact that 25% more work was accomplished after the net was installed. Why? Because the men had the assurance of their safety, and they were free to wholeheartedly serve the project.”*⁸

Remember, sin does not change your *relationship* with God. However, sin does break your *fellowship*

⁷ *Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), p. 71.

⁸ Source unknown.

with God. Chapter 3 will discuss maintaining your fellowship with God.

Scripture Memory

John 6:37

All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.

John 10:27-29

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; ²⁸and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

1 John 2:1

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

Check Your Progress

What are the three most significant lessons that you have learned in this Bible study? Why are they important?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Answer the following questions to measure your understanding of eternal security:

1. Why does being saved by grace mean you are secure? (p. 22–23) _____

2. How will you remain in God’s family and mature—by faith or by effort alone? (p. 23) _____

3. What is the difference between relationship and fellowship? (p. 24–25) _____

4. What can separate you from the love of God? (p. 28) _____

5. Is it possible to be struggling with sin, yet saved? (p. 29) _____

6. When does eternal life begin? (p. 30) _____

7. What motivates Christian obedience? (p. 31–32) _____

8. What is the difference between security and assurance? (p. 32) _____

9. If it were possible to lose salvation by sinning, who would remain saved? (p. 33) _____

10. Check off the following verses only when you can say them from memory:

John 6:37

1 John 2:1

John 10:27–29

Do you believe that you know this material well enough to teach it to someone else? _____ If not, review it until you do!