

# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, April 18, 2012 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study

## THE ETERNAL SECURITY OF THE BELIEVER “Introduction” *Various Scripture*

Few subjects have created more disturbance in the Body of Christ than the issue of the eternal security of the believer. Simply stated, this is the question: “*Can a Christian ever lose his/her salvation?*” Amplified, the larger question would be: “*Once a person has been born again into the family of God – received new life, a new nature, been justified and sealed by the Holy Spirit – can that individual ever become “unsaved” by sinning, or by ceasing to believe, or by any other cause?*”

In our fast-paced world of empty words, carnality, and shallow faith, not to mention the growing number of religious charlatans and defectors, the question becomes all the more important. This study will seek to give a clear and Biblical understanding of the subject of “The Eternal Security of the Believer.”

**JUST FOR YOUR INFORMATION** – Just to give you an idea of how controversial and debated the subject of eternal security in among main-line Christian denominations try your hand at the following exercise. Please a check mark [✓] beside the Christian denominations that you think believe in the doctrine of eternal security.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Methodist               | <input type="checkbox"/> Lutheran                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Catholic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Episcopal                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nazarene                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Southern Baptist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Church of Christ        | <input type="checkbox"/> Holiness                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mennonite Brethren      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Evangelical Free |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assembly of God         | <input type="checkbox"/> Pentecostal                 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Presbyterian | <input type="checkbox"/> Free Will Baptist           |

That is an indication of how controversial this subject is and a need to understand the issue from a Biblical perspective. This study will provide a basis for your serious consideration of the subject of eternal security of the believer. As we think through the issue of the eternal security of the believer, our desire is to let God speak to us from the Scripture. In doing so, most of our questions will be answered and our struggles will begin to cease. But at the outset, let me encourage you to do a couple of things so that you can really receive the benefit of this study. These are 3 important parameters we need to set in order to get the most of our study:

### **3 Important Parameters to Set:**

1. **Set aside all your defenses** – Sometimes we can get really “defensive” when some of the long held beliefs or what we always thought is challenged. It’s okay to be challenged, after all, what we think doesn’t really matter. All that really matter is what God says. Let’s get at that. We may, from time to time, get defensive because we feel like a part of us is being attacked. This study is not about attacking anyone, but getting at the truth.
2. **Relax your grip on any preconceived notions** – We all come at ideas, thoughts, situations, even teachings with some held presuppositions (assumptions, beliefs, opinions). It’s really hard not to. Those preconceived notions are ingrained in us from our earliest years, the way we are raised, the things we are taught, maybe religious thought with which we are brought up. These things can color how we read Scripture and interpret truths in God’s Word. We must relax and put aside our own held preconceived notions and let God’s Word speak for itself.
3. **Be open and teachable before God and His Word** – This is easier said than done, given the two above challenging statements: (1) Set aside all your defenses, (2) Relax your grip on any preconceived notions. Let’s just be open to God’s Word, and teachable and even allow God’s Word to maybe challenge some of our ideas about things.

**NOTE:** *These three things are really important in any study of God’s Word if you genuinely want to get at God’s truth. It is really hard for us to get past our own prejudices, presuppositions, and pride sometimes and just be teachable. It is absolutely imperative, however, in a controversial and debated subject like this one... eternal security.*

### **I. A PLACE TO BEGIN IN THE DISCUSSION OF ETERNAL SECURITY**

Certainly we need to ask ourselves, as we being this study, why a study like this... especially given it propensity for division and disagreement. Why study the Eternal Security of the Believer? Why is this study important? Well a couple of reason bear mentioning at the outset.

#### **Important Reasons for This Study:**

1. **Confusion** – 1 Corinthians 14:33 reminds us, *“For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”* The church at worship before God should reflect His character and nature because He is a God of peace and harmony, order and clarity, not strife and confusion. This subject is very confusing to many people particularly in the area of their salvation. Can we know we are saved or not? Is it just a shot in the dark? If we can lose our salvation, how can we ever really know if we are truly saved? If we can’t lose it, does that cheapen it and allow us to live and act anyway we want because we can’t lost it. Many people don’t know if they are saved or not. Some wonder what you have to do or not do to slip out of salvation. Some want to know if they have confessed enough sin to maybe get into Heaven. Some want to know if you can ever get resaved. Some wonder if they forget to confess one sin will they go to Hell. Some are stuck in sin and can’t seem to get out, so they wonder if they can even be saved. Some want to know what rules they have to follow to be saved or keep themselves saved.

2. **Assurance** – This study strikes right at the heart of the question of assurance. Many people lack assurance of their salvation and spend their entire life wondering if they are truly saved. **1 John 5:13** tells us that we can have assurance. In fact, this verse really tells us that God desires for us to have that assurance. Here is **1 John 5:13**, “*These things have I written to you that believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.*” By taking a look at what Scripture actually teaches about the issue of the eternal security of the believer a firmer grasp of assurance may be gained, as a deeper understanding of salvation itself is grasped.
3. **Fear** – Another important reason to study and understand this doctrine is “fear.” The issue of not really knowing if I am saved or not... if I have really done everything that I need to do can really strike a note of fear in a person who realizes that what we are really playing with here is our eternal destiny... Heaven or Hell. The fear of not knowing can be paralyzing, because we don’t if Hell might be in our future or not and we really can’t know without a proper understanding of this important doctrine
4. **Right interpretation and grounding in Scripture** – Scripture itself commands us in **2 Timothy 2:15** to, “*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing (correctly handling) the word of truth.*” To “be diligent” denotes zealous persistence in accomplishing a goal. And “rightly dividing” or “correctly handling” literally means “cutting it straight” – a reference to the exactness demanded by such trades as carpentry, masonry, and Paul’s trade of leather working and tentmaking. Precision and accuracy are required in biblical interpretation, beyond all other enterprises because the interpreter is handling Scripture in general, and God desires truth... that we rightly handle God’s Word... that we get to the heart of what it says and never use it, twist it, manipulate it, or pervert it’s truth in misleading people. We must be grounded in the whole of Scripture to understand a teaching and doctrine like this one, eternal security. It is absolutely imperative that we get at what Scripture, indeed is teaching about the subject.

As we think about the subject of eternal security, there are three crucial factors that impact the question: “*Can a Christian ever lost his/her salvation?*”

### **3 Crucial Factors in the Discussion of Eternal Security:**

1. **We have in mind an individual who is truly born again** – One who possess eternal life through faith in God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are talking about “possessors” not “professors.” Nowhere in Scripture does God promise eternal life to people who have done religious things, but have never truly accepted the gift of eternal life, having changed their minds from the rejection of Christ to faith in Him. No hand raising, no walking down an aisle, not prayer, not church membership or baptism or sacrificial act or giving of money or attending evangelistic crusades will ever take the place of being born again. People who actually possess eternal life are directly linked by faith to Jesus, the Christ. Personally and deliberately, they have believed that Jesus died and rose from the dead for them.
  - (1) **1 John 5:11-12** – “*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; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.*”(NIV)

- (2) **Titus 3:5-7** – *“He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.” (NIV)*
- (3) **Ephesians 2:8-9** – *“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” (NIV)*

These are familiar words perhaps that we have read before, but seldom taken literally. The person we are considering in this study must be truly, genuinely and absolutely a child of God.

2. **The subject is eternal security, not temporal carnality** – We are not dealing with God’s disciplining His wayward children. If you mix these two subjects, you’ll be hopelessly confused. Carnality has to do with the believer who willfully walks in the flesh and chooses a lifestyle that lacks the power and control of the Holy Spirit. If you will pause long enough to read three New Testament passages you will see that a carnal Christian is a child of God who lives under the discipline of the Lord.

- (1) **1 Corinthians 3:1-3** – *“<sup>1</sup> Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. <sup>2</sup> I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. <sup>3</sup> You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?” (NIV)*
- (2) **Galatians 5:16-23** – *“<sup>16</sup> So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <sup>17</sup> For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever <sup>18</sup> you want. <sup>18</sup> But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. <sup>19</sup> The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; <sup>20</sup> idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions <sup>21</sup> and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” (NIV)*
- (3) **Hebrews 12:5-13** – *“<sup>5</sup> And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, ‘My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, <sup>6</sup> because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.’ <sup>7</sup> Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? <sup>8</sup> If you are not*

*disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all.* <sup>9</sup> *Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live!* <sup>10</sup> *They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness.* <sup>11</sup> *No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.* <sup>12</sup> *Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.* <sup>13</sup> *‘Make level paths for your feet,’ so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed.” (NIV)*

Those Scripture do not refer to a Christian who has lost his or her salvation, but rather one who has become wayward, one who is walking in the energy of the flesh. Interestingly, those who teach that a Christian is not eternally secure usually have no place in their theology for carnality – and yet the Scripture clearly set forth the sad but real fact that a child of God can slump into periods of carnality. But as is true of children in our own family, they are still our children even if they willfully disobey us. We discipline them, but we cannot ever say they are not our children. Don’t confuse eternal security with temporary carnality.

- 3. We must focus on what God has done for His children, not what we have done for Him** – This is foundational. Salvation is not something we earn, but rather something we receive as a gift. We did not pursue God, He pursued us. He came to our rescue when we were without righteousness, without a shred of hope.

(1) **Romans 5:8** – *“<sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (NIV)*

(2) **Ephesians 2:1-7** – *“<sup>1</sup> As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup> All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh<sup>[a]</sup> and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. <sup>4</sup> But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup> And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” (NIV)*

When did our salvation occur? Look again at **Romans 5:8** – *“... while we were yet sinners .”* And, according to Ephesians 2, when we were spiritually “dead.” When “we were by nature children of wrath.” Without wanting to be overbearing, I believe this must be the starting point for an understanding of eternal security. Since salvation is not something we earn or win, since it is not something we ourselves achieved, then it stand to reason that we ourselves cannot take it away. Salvation is God’s gift. It is

His power that makes it possible... and it is unthinkable and impossible for you and me to alter in any way the ultimate accomplishment of His plan.

## II. THE DEFINITION OF ETERNAL SECURITY

In your own words, how would you define “eternal security?” Take a few moment and write your own definition of what you believe is meant by “eternal security.”

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1. **Other Names for the Doctrine of “The Eternal Security of the Believer”** – The doctrine known as “The Eternal Security of the Believer” is also known by several different names. These other names may or may not rightly describe the doctrine, but they are none the less different title that you may hear used to refer to the same thing.

### 4 Names for The Doctrine of Eternal Security:

- (1) **Perseverance or The Perseverance of the Saints** – This is the terminology used by famous theologian and reformer, John Calvin and his later followers. This term is used in regard to “final perseverance” of the saints. It means that believers, “can neither totally or finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end and be eternally saved.” All this according to the Westminster Confession. This doctrinal terminology for eternal security, “The Perseverance of the Saints” make us one of the petals in the tulip of Calvinism.

#### *TULIP of 5 Point Calvinism*

*Total Depravity* - Sin has affected all parts of man. The heart, emotions, will, mind, and body are all affected by sin. We are completely sinful.

*Unconditional Election* - God does not base His election on anything He sees in the individual. He chooses the elect according to the kind intention of His will (Eph. 1:4-8; Rom. 9:11) without any consideration of merit within the individual.

*Limited Atonement* - Jesus died only for the elect. Though Jesus’ sacrifice was sufficient for all, it was not efficacious for all. Jesus only bore the sins of the elect.

*Irresistible Grace* - When God calls his elect into salvation, they cannot resist.

*Perseverance of the Saints* - You cannot lose your salvation. Because the Father has elected, the Son has redeemed, and the Holy Spirit has applied salvation, those thus saved are eternally secure.

- (2) **Security of the Believer** – This is the shortened term most often used by proponents of the doctrine today.
- (3) **Assurance of Salvation** – Sometimes the doctrine of eternal security is referred to as “Assurance of Salvation.” This term or phrase is actually not a good description

of the doctrine, but is very different. We will look at the difference briefly in this study.

- (4) **Once Saved, Always Saved** - While this is a somewhat accurate description of the doctrine of eternal security it is an oversimplification of the doctrine, and it is the terminology or phrase most commonly used by who do not hold to the doctrine... those who would say that Scripture teaches otherwise. Another phrase that is sometimes used along with “once saved, always saved” is “cheap grace” meaning that the emphasis on the doctrine of eternal security is upon being saved by grace alone plus nothing else cheapens grace and indicates that one could do whatever he or she wants and live as they please because they are recipients of grace.

2. **A Good Definition of Eternal Security** – A good, concise definition of the eternal security of the believer is:

**“Eternal Security is the work of God that guarantees that the gift of salvation, once received, is forever and cannot be lost.”**

**3 Important Parts to the Definition:**

- (1) **“the work of God” – John 3:16**
- (2) **“the gift of salvation” – Ephesians 2:8-9**
- (3) **“salvation... is forever and cannot be lost” – Romans 6:23**

3. **Clearing Up A Difference** – At this point it is important for us to clear up a misunderstanding that is often brought up in any discussion on the doctrine of eternal security and that is the difference between eternal security and assurance of salvation. There is a big difference between the two as already stated.

**The Basic Difference Between Eternal Security and Assurance of Salvation:**

- (1) **Eternal Security is a doctrine based on the interpretation of Scriptural teaching on the subject of salvation.**
- (2) **Assurance of salvation is mental, emotional, and psychological precept or concept that is experienced as a realization that one possesses usually as one grows and matures in the faith through proper teaching and grounding in the word of God.**
- (3) **Eternal Security is based more on knowledge and interpretation**
- (4) **Assurance is based, to large extent, on feeling and emotion.**
- (5) **Both often bring unnecessary, but terrible trauma to a person’s life.**

**5 Reasons People Often Lack Assurance:**

- (1) **Some doubt the reality of their commitment to Christ** – No evidence/commitment in their life and it causes them to doubt
- (2) **Some question the correctness of the procedure they went through** – Can’t pin point a specific time, didn’t follow the right procedure, don’t think they did it right the first time
- (3) **Those who don’t believe in eternal security will naturally lack assurance** – May be always wondering if they are still saved or if they need to do it again

- (4) **Sin** – Sin in a believers life will always lead to doubt if it remains unconfessed
- (5) **A lost condition** – For that one who is having doubts or lack of assurance of their salvation they should check it out and be sure they are saved because some who doubt have reason to... they are indeed lost

### III. THE DEBATE OF ETERNAL SECURITY

Throughout the years, the eternal security of the believer has been a hotly debated issue in the church. Many theologians teach that it is possible to lose ones salvation, others claim that salvation is secure and cannot be lost once obtained. Just to give us a taste of some of the what the controversy may be over and to take a look at how difficult the issue is to tackle I want to take you to three controversial passages that seemingly teach the other side of the issue. These three passages will actually be addressed later in the study, but for now just let them solidify for you the complexity of this doctrinal study.

#### **3 Difficult Passages for the Eternal Security Debate:**

1. **Galatians 5:1-4**
2. **Hebrews 6:1-6**
3. **Hebrews 10:26-27**

#### **A Great Quote To Consider:**

*“The doctrine that claims a person can lose his salvation makes salvation conditional. It says that since God has saved us, we will maintain our salvation as we continue to match up with God’s standard. But if we fail at any point we lose it.” – Dr. John MacArthur*

What do you think of this quote? Do you agree? Disagree? Meditate on it this next week.

*We can never match up with God’s standard on our own!*