



INTRODUCTION

SAFE AND SECURE: OUR ETERNAL SECURITY IN CHRIST

Your salvation is a wonderful gift from God. Can you lose it? Can you reject it? These are serious questions for every believer, particularly during difficult times when we do things displeasing to God or act unfaithfully toward Him. We also wonder about friends who once claimed to be Christians but now deny their faith. What happened and why? Can they ever come back? Were they really saved in the first place?

God wants you to be sure of your salvation and relationship with Him. This is often called the security of the believer and is a hallmark of our faith. We believe God holds us securely and nothing can ever break those bonds. Reconciling this truth with our feelings when life is difficult or our behavior is sketchy can be disorienting. We can easily get confused and begin to question our salvation. You will

discover in this study how to overcome those doubts and stay on a more confident path of spiritual growth. You will learn how persevering through the struggles of spiritual growth actually legitimizes your salvation rather than questioning its validity.

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Session 1



Can I Lose My Salvation?

THE POINT

God keeps His children securely in His hands.

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

My Sunday School teacher took off his wedding ring, placed it in my twelve-year old hands, and told me, “Using both hands, hold this ring as tightly as you can.” He then placed his larger hands firmly around mine and asked, “Do you think anyone could get the ring from us?”

“No chance,” was my confident reply. He then answered my earlier question about being sure of my salvation. “Holding this ring is a picture of how God holds us securely. He and Jesus have us in their hands and nothing can remove us from their protective care.”

Five decades later, I still remember that conversation and the example my teacher used to convey the security of my salvation. God has a hold of me, and He will never let go! My salvation is a free gift from God, and He sustains our relationship by His power. My conversion, and the continuation of my relationship with God, are both by His power—not mine.

When we struggle to live out our faith, we might think we are losing it. Not so. Let’s discover how God sustains us, even in our weaknesses and doubts.

QUESTION 1:

Where’s someplace you’ve always felt safe?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

JOHN 10:7-11

⁷ Jesus said again, “Truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸ All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep didn’t listen to them. ⁹ I am the gate. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰ A thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance. ¹¹ I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.”

Jesus used two metaphors to describe Himself as the Source and Sustainer of our salvation. He began by twice calling Himself the gate of the sheep pen and then twice describing Himself as a good shepherd. The gate symbolizes Jesus as the way of salvation. He contrasted those who use the gate with thieves and robbers who slip over the fence rather than enter the right way. Jesus is the true means of salvation—the gateway to a relationship with God.

Many people believe all religions are valid and any expression of spirituality is sufficient to find salvation. The Bible doesn’t teach this. Christians believe Jesus is the only way of salvation. Critics consider us narrow-minded. We are neither. We simply follow Jesus and take Him at His word. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). When Jesus described Himself as the gate of salvation, He communicated this reality with a powerful symbol. Jesus underscored, “If anyone enters by me, he will be saved” (10:9). Clearly, Jesus wanted us to know He is the only way of salvation.

When someone claims Jesus is a good teacher, but not the only Savior, they’re contradicting themselves. If Jesus is a good teacher, that means He taught truth, and one key truth He taught was that He’s the only way of salvation. If He lied about this, then He isn’t a good teacher—He’s a fraud. You can’t believe Jesus is a good teacher and reject what He taught.

The most important reality that establishes Jesus’s claim as the only Source of salvation is the resurrection. Jesus came back from the dead—no one else in human history has done that! So, when Jesus makes bold claims about being the only means of salvation, you can trust Him because His authority to speak on these issues is validated by His resurrection.

Jesus underscored His saving work by contrasting which voice the sheep listen to and which they reject. He had earlier commented that His sheep hear His voice and follow Him (10:3). The thieves and robbers in the story were apparently calling sheep to follow them as well, but to no avail. Salvation comes to those who respond to the right voice—the voice of Jesus.

Many voices are calling for your attention today, ranging from people you know personally to the incessant noise from anonymous hordes on social media. Who are you listening to today? Make sure you listen to Jesus more than any other voice clamoring for your attention.

There are three different aspects of sheep herding mentioned in this passage: the sheep, the gate, and the shepherd. Jesus called Himself “the good shepherd” (v. 11). He shifted the metaphor from being a gate to the shepherd. Jesus used an extended metaphor, meaning He was drawing various themes from a common element of first-century culture: shepherding sheep. Jesus is the means of salvation and the Sustainer of the saved. He is the way you enter salvation and the one who nurtures your growth as a believer. He is your Savior and Sustainer.

Since Jesus is your Good Shepherd, He takes care of you. He supports you when you are weak, heals your hurts, and carries you when you can’t make it on your own. Jesus as your Good Shepherd is a picture of His power to sustain your salvation. When your faith is weak and doubt is troubling, Jesus is a steady presence. He will never leave you or forsake you, no matter what happens in your life.

QUESTION 2:

How have you seen the enemy steal, kill, and destroy in our culture?

JOHN 10:14-18

¹⁴ “I am the good shepherd. I know my own, and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father. I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶ But I have other sheep that are not from this sheep pen; I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. Then there will be one flock, one shepherd. ¹⁷ This is why the Father loves me, because I lay down my life so that I may take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me, but I lay it down on my own. I have the right to lay it down, and I have the right to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

Jesus and God have a unique, intimate relationship. They are not only Father and Son, but two co-equal parts of the Trinitarian Godhead. While that is a wondrous mystery, it’s also awe-inspiring. God and Jesus enjoy unparalleled togetherness, intermingled in ways we can’t fully describe but appreciate as a perfect example of unified companionship.

When Jesus described His relationship to you, He compared it to how closely He relates to His Father. He said, “I know my own, and my own know me, just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father” (vv. 14-15). As our Good Shepherd, Jesus knows us intimately and cares for us passionately. We aren’t numbered livestock in a corporate holding pen. We are named followers who are individually known.

It's easy to feel left out, like we don't matter that much to people around us. These feelings of inadequacy can easily be transferred to our relationship with God. When we fall short of God's expectations, do things we know are wrong, or get discouraged by trials, we might feel Jesus has abandoned us. Based on how He described the intimacy in our relationship—like He has with His Father—that's not going to happen. Jesus is your Good Shepherd, and you are a permanent member of His flock.

Jesus then described how much He loves His sheep. He made the ultimate sacrifice for us. Jesus's death on the cross was essential for our salvation. Think about the depth of His sacrifice and the cost He paid to secure your salvation! Since Jesus went to this extreme to assure your salvation, does it make any sense to assume it can easily be lost? When Jesus paid the price for your salvation, it was for a permanent solution to your separation from God.

When Jesus died for us, He did so willingly. No one took Jesus's life from Him. Jesus chose to die. He underscored this truth, "No one takes it from me" (v. 18), meaning no one took His life from Him. He gave it freely. He made the greatest sacrifice in history: a perfect man dying for imperfect people; a sinless man dying for wicked sinners.

In this context, Jesus also reminded those gathered around Him that He would give His life for many more people. Jesus died so millions of people could have a relationship with God. Jesus predicted many more people would "listen to my voice" and then "there will be one flock" (v. 16). When Jesus died, it was for the sins of humanity, not just a select few religious elites. He longs to gather a huge flock, an eternal flock of believers who are assembled permanently in a relationship with God.

You are one of the people Jesus died to save. This was not a frivolous act to foster a temporary solution. It was an incomparable sacrifice which made salvation possible. The price paid to establish your relationship with God was substantial, enough to assure a permanent relationship with God that withstands all threats. Jesus did not die to assure temporary or partial salvation. The cost was far too high for anything less than eternal security as a result.

QUESTION 3:

In what ways have you experienced Jesus as your Good Shepherd?

JOHN 10:27-30

²⁷ "My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all. No one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one."

Engage

MY SECURITY

Rate yourself on each prompt. Then answer the questions.

Since I was saved, I have _____ doubted my salvation.

NEVER — RARELY — SOMETIMES — REGULARLY — OFTEN

**I have feared losing forgiveness from God
because of my thoughts, choices, or behavior.**

NEVER — RARELY — SOMETIMES — REGULARLY — OFTEN

**I feel confident that nothing can separate me
from my relationship with Jesus Christ.**

NEVER — RARELY — SOMETIMES — REGULARLY — OFTEN

My confidence in salvation is dependent on _____.

What (if anything) can cause you to doubt your salvation?

What truth(s) help you take heart that your salvation is secure?

In the ancient world, shepherds often gathered their flocks together for protection and companionship. The sheep would intermingle, but when it was time to reassemble as a particular flock and move to a new location, the sheep would respond only to the voice of their shepherd. Shepherds not only had distinctive sounds which were used to signal their sheep, they also called them by name.

Against this backdrop, Jesus then added, “My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me” (v. 27). One of the marks of your salvation is hearing Jesus’s voice and responding to Him. Jesus speaks today through the Bible. When you heard the gospel, you responded positively. This is a good sign you are one of His sheep. You didn’t reject the message but embraced it, leading to your conversion. You heard Jesus’s voice and responded to Him. You were part of a larger flock, but you heard the voice of Jesus and followed Him.

For those who respond in this way, Jesus promises to give them eternal life. You receive eternal life at the moment of your conversion. That’s when you are assured of a permanent connection to God and a place with Him forever. Your eternal life may be fulfilled at the moment of death, but it’s received at the moment you trusted Jesus as your Savior. Jesus gives eternal life to all who hear His voice calling them to salvation and choose to follow Him. He gives this gift once and never takes it away.

Jesus promised that, once He gives a person eternal life, “No one will snatch them out of my hand” (v. 28). He then added, “No one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand” (v. 29). God and Jesus have us in their hands! That’s powerful imagery of the security of our salva-

tion. As Jesus said, “My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all” (v. 29). *All* means *all*. God and Jesus hold us securely in their hands and nothing can violate their protection.

QUESTION 4:

What are the consequences of placing our security in things other than Jesus?

We live in frightening times; natural disasters, terrorist attacks, and school shootings make the daily news feed. We are susceptible to personal crises like health failures and relationship meltdowns. We sometimes behave badly, flaunting God’s standards and making destructive choices that leave us guilty and broken. In the midst of these circumstances, doubt flourishes. We wonder if life’s circumstances or our poor choices will cancel our salvation.

The answer is clear—no! God promises to hold us securely and nothing—and that means nothing—releases you from the salvation you have in Jesus. The Bible describes this experience as being “sealed with the promised Holy Spirit” (Eph. 1:13). This completes our Trinitarian protective custody! God and Jesus have us in their hands, saturated by the Spirit who adds His layer of protection to our hearts.

QUESTION 5:

How does knowing we’re secure in Christ change the way we live?

LIVE IT OUT

God keeps His children securely in His hands. As you live securely in your salvation, do these things when doubt arises. Choose one of the following applications.

- **Trust Christ.** Eternal security begins with looking to Christ for salvation. Talk to your Bible study leader or a trusted Christian about placing your faith and trust in Christ. The inside front cover of this book can help.
- **Memorize Scripture.** Memorize John 10:27-30 and meditate on God's promises. Anytime you doubt your salvation, clasp a small object in your hands and rehearse God's promises either in your thoughts or aloud. Thank God you are more secure in Him than the object you are tightly squeezing.
- **Embrace God's truth.** Reject emotional foundations for your faith and base what you think and do on instructions from the Bible. When a particular issue (like death or disease) makes you afraid, discover what the Bible says on that subject and make your decisions based on truth instead of feelings.

