

# SURE OF SALVATION

Leader pages on pp. 124-127

**THE POINT:**  
WE CAN BE SURE GOD SAVES US WHEN WE TRUST IN CHRIST.

## 1 JOHN 5:1-5,11-13,18-21

<sup>1</sup> Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father also loves the one born of him. <sup>2</sup> This is how we know that we love God’s children: when we love God and obey his commands. <sup>3</sup> For this is what love for God is: to keep his commands. And his commands are not a burden, <sup>4</sup> because everyone who has been born of God conquers the world. This is the victory that has conquered the world: our faith. <sup>5</sup> Who is the one who conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

+  
+  
+

**MEMORY VERSE**

.....  
<sup>11</sup> And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup> **The one who has the Son has life. The one who does not have the Son of God does not have life.** <sup>13</sup> I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

.....  
<sup>18</sup> We know that everyone who has been born of God does not sin, but the one who is born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him. <sup>19</sup> We know that we are of God, and the whole world is under the sway of the evil one. <sup>20</sup> And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know the true one. We are in the true one—that is, in his Son, Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

<sup>21</sup> Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

**KEYWORDS**

**Love for God (v. 3)**—This is not separate from keeping the commands of God. God’s commands teach His people how to do what God accepts as pleasing (Rom. 12:1-2).

**Testimony (v. 11)**—The word means “witness,” “evidence,” and “record.” This word translates the

Greek word from which we get our English word *martyr*. This testimony is in the believer. We have growing conviction of the gift of eternal life we have received.

**True God (v. 20)**—Here John is clearly affirming the full divinity of Christ.



## WHAT PROOF DO WE HAVE THAT WE ARE SAVED?

Many religions claim to offer people a way to God and/or eternal life, but how do you know you will actually reach God or eternal life?

- Islam teaches that paradise awaits those who are obedient to the practices of Islam, but it offers no guarantee that a Muslim has obeyed enough to “make it.”
- Hinduism says reincarnation might eventually get you to enlightenment. However, how can one possibly know he or she has ever reached enlightenment?
- Even cults that include a belief in Jesus add an element of works to what is required to go to heaven. What they cannot offer is any assurance that you’ve done enough to reach heaven.

The Christian life—grounded solely in the Word of God—points us to the death and resurrection of Christ as the only path to salvation and a relationship with God. We can add nothing to it! When we simply trust what Christ has done, we can be assured of a relationship with God.

### I Believe Jesus Is the Christ

// 1 John 5:1-5

It is impossible to be filled with the Spirit of God and His love if the object of our faith is an erroneous view of Christ. Everything rises or falls on our view of Christ.

On the other hand, if we believe correctly about Jesus Christ, trusting in Him as Lord and Savior, then we can be assured of the new birth. Our faith—our trust in Christ—is evidence of the new birth. And tied to our faith is our love and obedience. What we believe determines how we live.

Through the new birth, the curse of the old life is broken. John wrote, “Everyone who has been born of God conquers the world. This is the victory that has conquered the world: our faith” (v. 4). Christ is the sovereign Lord, victorious over the world (Satan’s realm), and believers also are victorious through their faith in Jesus Christ.

## THE POINT: WE CAN BE SURE GOD SAVES US WHEN WE TRUST IN CHRIST.

The evidence that Jesus is the Christ is overwhelming. For example:

- Jesus pointed to Himself as God in human flesh. (John 8:58; 10:30).
- Jesus was explicitly identified as God by the apostles John and Paul, two men who encountered Jesus (John 1:1; Rom. 9:5; Phil. 2:5-6; Col. 1:15; Titus 2:13).
- Jesus was described as having divine attributes: omnipresent (Matt. 28:19-20), eternal (John 1:1-2), omnipotent (John 5:19), omniscient (John 16:30), and unchanging (Heb. 1:12).
- Jesus manifested divine prerogatives: He forgave sins (Matt. 9:2) and raised the dead (John 11:38-44).
- Jesus accepted divine worship and honor (Matt. 14:33, 28:9).

All these truths (and many more) point to Jesus as the Christ. Consequently, those who trust in Him are born of God.

### WHAT EVIDENCE DO WE SEE IN PEOPLE'S LIVES WHEN THEY ACCEPT JESUS' GIFT OF SALVATION?

Denise Matthews was one who placed her trust in Jesus as the Christ and became born of God. The world knew Denise as "Vanity," who achieved success as a singer and actress through the 1980s and 90s. One of her most popular roles was in the movie *The Last Dragon*. Denise had a difficult childhood. Her father physically and verbally abused her for years, and this led to a poor self image. She soon became addicted to cocaine through her associations in the music industry. But Denise became a Christian vowing to change her life, which included not taking any more sexualized movie roles.

Denise's conversion came about following a serious illness. In 1994, she was hospitalized with near-fatal kidney failure from a drug overdose. The doctors gave her three days to live. While in the hospital, she said Jesus told her if she gave up her Vanity persona, He would save her. When she recovered, she fully gave up her career as a performer. She said, "When I came to the Lord Jesus Christ, I threw out about 1,000 tapes of mine—every interview, every tape, every video, everything."<sup>12</sup>



### DIGGING DEEPER PHASES OF SALVATION

According to Ephesians 2:8-9 we are saved through faith. It is not because of anything we have done. The word *salvation* means to be rescued or delivered from danger. The salvation we receive because of Christ is identified in three tenses. First, we have been saved (past tense). At the point of salvation our sins are forgiven entirely. We no longer have to pay the penalty of sin. We have been justified (2 Cor. 5:21). Secondly, we are being saved (present tense). This phase is the process in which we are being continually delivered from sin's power. We are being sanctified (2 Pet. 3:18). This is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, we shall be saved (future tense). This means that once we are in heaven we will be delivered from the presence of sin entirely. We will be glorified (Phil. 3:20-21).

### How can knowing the tenses of salvation help you daily?



Following a kidney transplant, Denise spent the rest of her life dedicated to Christ, speaking at churches and sharing her testimony. Denise died in 2015.

## God's Word Says So

// 1 John 5:11-13

John's whole point of writing this short letter was that we may know we have eternal life in Christ. "I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life" (v. 13). Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, John wrote that we can be sure of our salvation, but this is not the only place God's Word confirms the security believers have in Christ.

### HOW CAN WE BE CONFIDENT WE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE?

Jesus stated, "My sheep hear my voice, I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:27-28). Jesus taught that the power of His hand keeps His followers secure. He continued, "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. I and the Father are one" (vv.

29-30). We are kept by both the Father and the Son. And we are not to leave out the Holy Spirit either. "In him you also were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed" (Eph. 1:13). The work of a triune God seals the security of our salvation.

The absolute security of salvation caused Paul to write:

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:37-39).

Absolutely nothing can separate us from the salvation we have in Christ.

One study found that Americans are among the most anxious people on earth.<sup>13</sup> The Scriptures call us to take our concerns to God in prayer rather than engage in fruitless worry (Phil. 4:6), but too many believers still give in to the temptation to worry and be anxious. If you have trusted in Christ for eternal life, then uncertainty of salvation should never be a cause of anxiety. We can know we have eternal life because God's Word says so.

## My Life Has Changed

// 1 John 5:18-21

In this concluding section, John got straight to the point. The nature of the new birth has an ongoing result. "We know that everyone who has been born of God does not sin, but the one who is born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him" (v. 18). One of the lasting results of the new birth is a repentant life. It is not that believers will never sin, but they will not

## THE POINT: WE CAN BE SURE GOD SAVES US WHEN WE TRUST IN CHRIST.

continually live in sin. Christians are those who continually repent. Refusing to repent or even concern at all over sin is evidence a person has never been transformed by the gospel. Proof of the new birth is a heightened awareness to sin.

### HOW DOES GOD PROTECT US FROM THE EVIL ONE?

Because believers are now in Christ, they do not continue in sin, and Jesus—“the one who is born of God” (v.18)—protects us from Satan’s influence. Christ keeps the Christian from living a sinful lifestyle.

Because believers are still tempted to sin, John gave one final exhortation, “Little children, guard yourselves from idols” (v. 21). When we begin to give our hearts away to other things, we ruin our testimony to the world. Therefore, as Christ keeps us, let us guard our hearts against idols—anything we let come between us and our love and commitment to Christ.

Jesus Christ, in His great love on high, embraces you, opens His arms to you, and keeps you eternally secure. You can be sure of your salvation when you have trusted in Christ.

### DID YOU KNOW?

The famed Renaissance artist, Michelangelo, displayed a changed life in his later years. Some see this change as a reflection of a spiritual rebirth. The poems he once wrote were about tormented death, but his latter poems were primarily prayers focused on faith, the cross, and forgiveness. One of his final sculptures, Florentine Pietà, shows Mary, Mary Magdalene, and Nicodemus taking the body of Jesus from the cross. Many believe Michelangelo sculpted himself as Nicodemus, the man who came secretly to Jesus and learned the truth that “you must be born again” (John 3:7). At the end of his life, Michelangelo’s only hope was not in being a great artist or receiving acclaim from others, but rather in Christ. He ended his poem, “On the Brink of Death,” with this: “Painting nor sculpture now can lull to rest, My soul that turns to His great love on high, Whose arms to clasp us on the cross were spread.”<sup>14</sup>

### How has your life changed since you first encountered Christ?

## LIVE IT

### How will you rest in the assurance we have of our salvation?

God is like no other. He has proven Himself faithful and trustworthy. When we trust Him, He saves us. The Christian life—grounded solely in the Bible—points us to the death and resurrection of Christ as the only path to salvation and a relationship with God. When we simply trust what Christ has done, we can be assured of our salvation and a relationship with God.

+ + +

- **Evaluate your trust.** Do you trust God with the small and the large things in your life? Pray for Him to reveal a couple of areas in your life that still need change. Ask God to help you trust Him more.
- **Be encouraged by others.** Ask others to tell you the stories of God’s goodness in their lives. Be encouraged by the life-changing work of God in those around you. It is balm for the anxious soul.
- **Get ready to share.** Keep at the forefront of your mind the ways God has blessed and saved you, so you can share with others. Ask God to give you opportunities to share.

# DAILY READINGS

## 1. “TRULY” // JOHN 5:24-25

Neon signs help to draw attention to messages and advertisements. This is done with bright lights, bold lettering, and intense exclamation marks. We see them a lot in movies or on the streets. Another way to attract attention could be the use of a town crier who shouts the words, “Hear ye, hear ye!” Our ears will instantly be drawn to those words because of the loud insistence of the crier's command. The repetition of a word or command makes the difference. Jesus said the word “truly” twice. He wanted passionately for His message to get across because He knew what He said to be true. So in these verses, without a shadow of a doubt, if anyone hears the Word of God and believes in Christ, they will have eternal life.

**Jesus shouted this to our hearts; let's shout this from the rooftops.**

## 2. NO STUMBLING // JUDE 1:24

When someone undergoes a foot injury, most times it will require the assistance of certain medical equipment. A person could require crutches, a walker, or may have to wear a boot. These items will keep the injured from falling. Thank God for His promise to protect us from stumbling. We have God's help to keep us from falling into sin. He operates in our lives like a crutch we can lean on to overcome Satan's tricks and temptations. We know that sin separates us from God. So He keeps us connected to Him. There is no need to fear. We won't fall back into that from which we have come. God by His power will keep us.

**God's grace sustains us day-to-day as we live out our salvation in obedience to Him.**

## 3. THAT SETTLES IT // HEBREWS 7:25

Hebrew priests were appointed to act on behalf of the people. This was done by offering gifts and sacrifices for sins. But their offering was a temporary fix and didn't solve the sin problem. Today we have Jesus as our High Priest, and He is permanent in

this role (Heb. 7:24). Therefore He is the ultimate authority for our spiritual lives, and what He says settles any issue. That means once we are saved, we are saved forever. When we come to Jesus and receive salvation, we will never lose it.

**He is able to save completely those who draw close to God through Him.**

## 4. UNFAILING LOVE // ISAIAH 54:10

In the lifetime of believers, we will experience many trials and tribulations. Those trials include natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, and tornadoes; or accidents in our homes and cars; or sicknesses and diseases. Isaiah addresses some of these. But he says that in the event these things happen, God's love will not be changed. In our darkest hour, we can rest in the knowledge that God's love will not be shaken. He truly is a God of compassion. And for that we should be grateful.

**When it seems like everything is coming apart, I can stand on the knowledge that I am loved by God.**

## 5. GOOD IN PAIN // ROMANS 8:28

A defendant in a courtroom believes his lawyer will have his best interest at heart. A child believes his parents have his best interest at heart. A student trusts that her teacher has the best education in mind for her. Even though this is true, in some cases, people will fail us. This nullifies the former belief and can damage relationships. The interest God has in us will never change, and the plan He has for us will never be thwarted. At the heart of this is the love we have for God. He sees this love and responds to it by making sure that everything works out okay—even when our lives are not good. Because of love nothing can stop God's plan from moving forward. We can rest assured our loving God is working through our hardships. He will bring glory to Himself, and He will bring good for us.

**There is purpose for our pain.**



# Can I Lose My Salvation?

BY MARK CROSTON

A saintly elderly lady approached her pastor and asked, “Can I lose my salvation?” Her question perplexed the pastor after all the Bible studies she had taught, prayers she had prayed, and evangelistic events in which she had participated. Yet, to give her assurance he shared three points from 1 John 2.

“First,” he told her, “you can never lose that which is kept by another.” First John 2:1-2 says, “He himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins.” The phrase “He himself” lets us know that we are saved and kept by Jesus. Since we are saved by grace, the only way we can be kept is by the same grace that saved us: “... not from works, so that no one can boast” (Eph. 2:9). As we do not have the power to save ourselves, we also do not

have the power to keep ourselves. We must be kept by the power of God. Paul says, “I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day” (2 Tim. 1:12).

“Second,” he said, “you can never lose what you never had.” Often, we raise the question of losing our salvation because of people we know who are no longer in the church. First John 2:19 says, “They went out from us, but they did not belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. However, they went out so that it might be made clear that none of them belongs to us.” This lets us know that one sign of a true Christian is perseverance—that is to say,



they continue in the faith until the end. This means they will continue to be part of the fellowship of believers.

There is no such thing as a “revolving-door” salvation. Hebrews 6:4-6a states, “For it is impossible to renew to repentance those who were once enlightened, who tasted the heavenly gift, who shared in the Holy Spirit, who tasted God’s good word and the powers of the coming age, and who have fallen away.” Here the whole idea of falling away is in the subjunctive mood. The subjunctive mood is used to express wishes and hypothetical situations. So, it is saying that if it were even possible for one to lose their salvation, they could not get it back again. Jesus is the door, not the revolving door.

The point is that true faith is more than talk. Matthew 7:21ff affirms this: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.” Note the contrast between the word “says” and the word “does.” This lets us know that true Christianity is more than just talk, it’s our walk!

“Finally,” he reminded her, “you can never lose that which has become a part of you;” “What you have heard from the beginning is to remain in you. If what you have heard from the beginning remains in you, then you will remain

in the Son and in the Father (1 John 2:24). The phrase “remain in” is repeated over and over.

The idea of losing one’s salvation is not like saying, “I had ten cupcakes and I lost one.” It is possible to lose one of ten cupcakes. To lose one’s salvation is more like saying, “I had a cake, but I lost the butter out of it!” Once you have baked the cake it is impossible to lose the butter out of it. Why? Because it is no longer butter, sugar, eggs, and flour. It is a new creation, a cake! When we get saved, we too are new creations! “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!” (1 Cor. 5:17). It’s no wonder we call it being born again!

Upon the pastor’s conclusion, the senior saint responded, “Thanks Pastor! I just wanted to hear you tell it. Don’t worry about me. You can’t make me doubt Him, because I know too much about Him!”

“I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13).

Mark Croston is director of Black Church Ministries at Lifeway.