

EQUIPPED: Tough Questions

Chapter 2

What's Eternal Life and Is Eternal Security Biblical?

Eternity. It awaits us all.

But how many of us actually have some degree of understanding of what eternity is about?

Unfortunately, those who don't know Christ tend to disregard it. Maybe unintentionally - possibly on purpose - they avoid the subject in hopes that it doesn't exist. But choosing not to believe something doesn't erase its reality. Eternity's real. In fact, it's only a last-breath away.

And then there's us. Christians. Those of us who have surrendered our lives to Christ. For some, eternity is a distant and difficult concept, so they stray away from any attempt to understand it. For others, maybe they've heard, they've read, they've studied - but instead of embracing the sheer ecstasy of eternity, they make their limited eschatological theology a point of contention - arguing about it instead of rejoicing over it.

So, I'm just going to go ahead and say this up front... I don't have all the answers. No one does.

Veiled within Holy Writ are some secrets that Heaven alone has reserved the right to reveal. So, while we live on this planet, we need to accept the fact that there are some things we just won't know this side of Heaven.

Scripture speaks very clearly and thoroughly about many topics. On some, however, God's Word is intentionally limited. He clearly makes known what He wants us to clearly know. But we can't make things up, suppose upon the Word of God, or take things out of context to try to make Scripture say what we think it says or what we want to believe is true. Fabricating God's Word is how misunderstandings, arguments, and false teachings get started.

We don't make God's Word conform to our finite ideas. We conform our beliefs to the infinite wisdom of God clearly conveyed in His Word. Where Scripture is silent, we must be silent. Where Scripture speaks, we must listen and believe and live and teach.

And we can't pick and choose. Okay...so we could - and people do - but it's a pretty perilous undoing of the what cannot be undone. Truth is truth. It doesn't change because we select

certain scriptures to apply to our beliefs. We don't change the Word of God. The Word of God changes us.

Many godly people disagree on certain aspects of eternity. Our gracious God gives us a glimpse of eternity in His Word, but our finite understanding leaves us all lacking. So, let's give each other the grace to grow with the understanding that none of us completely understands.

This study is not about creating doctrinal debates or disputing differences. It's about intentionally and systematically studying God's Word in context - precept-upon-precept. And it's about fanning the flames in each of our hearts to drive us to our own personal exploration and examination of the Word of God.

So, let's peel back the curtain and take a peek at what the Bible teaches us about eternity. Our study will help us grow deep roots in the following areas:

- **Eternal Life** - What it is and how do we get it?
- **Eternal Security** - Is it biblical?

1. Eternal Life - What is it and how do we get it?

Undoubtedly, the most important question you'll ever seek an answer for is *What is eternal life and how do we get it?* After all, your eternity hinges on what you believe that answer to be. But there are so many ideas floating around - being taught from pulpits and people around the world - about how to be saved...how to have eternal life.

How do we know what's right? Is it as simple as believing? Is that it? Do we just have to mentally agree that Jesus died on the cross for our sins in order to be saved? What about repentance and faith?

The Creator of each soul isn't in Heaven hiding His eternal answers behind the stars. He has given us His Son and His Word so that we might know deep down to the depths of our souls that we know Him, and that because we know Him, we have eternal life.

Take a moment and write out how you currently believe salvation is acquired.

Read the following verses and then sum up what you have read in Scripture about salvation. (Pay close attention to the questions following the verses below.)

- Romans 3:23 (*Who has sinned and what does sin cause to happen?*)
- Romans 6:23 (*What do we earn for sin? What is the gift of God?*)
- Romans 5:8 (*How does God demonstrate His love for us?*)
- Romans 10:9-10 (*What do you have to do to be saved? Is it your words or your heart?*)
- Romans 10:13 (*What does it mean to truly call upon Jesus as Lord?*)

Now read John 1:11-12 and describe what this passage says about how someone is given the right to become a child of God.

Take a moment to read John 3:1-7.

Describe what kind of person Nicodemus was. _____

What did Jesus tell Nicodemus had to happen in order for someone to see the Kingdom of God? _____

How would you describe the difference between a physical birth and a spiritual birth? _____

John 1:11-12 tells us that in order to become a child of God, *we must receive Christ*. And in John 3:1-7 we are told that *we must be born again* - we must have a spiritual birth - in order to see the Kingdom of God. Without a doubt, personal responsibility is involved in receiving Christ

- but there is also Devine intervention that must take place for the spiritually dead to become spiritually alive.

Ephesians 2:1 says, “*And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,*” It is Jesus alone who is life (John 1:3) and who has the power to give life to the dead. That’s why we must be born again. The spiritually dead must become spiritually alive.

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.” 1 Corinthians 15:22
The thing is, God doesn’t want us to have a *hope-so* salvation. There is no peace or joy in wondering if we have eternal life or not.

*“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God,
that you may know that you have eternal life,
and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”
1 John 5:13*

What does the above verse (1 John 5:13) tell you about the heart of God for you to know that you’re His?

How might it affect you if you could never be sure that you were saved?

Read through Luke 13:3, Acts 26:20, and Ephesians 2:8-9 and answer the following.

How do you think faith and repentance work together as it pertains to salvation?

While we're talking about faith and repentance, let's define them both.

The Amplified Bible Classic Edition defines saving faith as the kind of belief that *cleaves to, trusts in, and relies upon the Lord*. It's the kind of belief that Hebrews 10:39 speaks of.

A deep profound kind of flinging-over abandoned faith. Radical, risky, seeing without believing kind of faith. It saves, yes! But it also sustains, compels, and completes.

Because this kind of faith isn't just about what we believe in our heads. It's what we are willing to surrender to with our lives. James 2:19 even says the demons believe and tremble. They believe but their belief is far removed from faith.

Faith is more than believing something is true. It's flinging all you are over to that truth.

Repentance is defined in the original Greek as *metanoia*. It means a *change of mind - a reversal of thought*. It's important to note that the works done which give evidence of repentance are not the same thing as repentance itself. It is rather, a change of mind necessary for salvation but it isn't a work that is done to be saved.

I once heard Charles Stanley describe faith and repentance as *two sides of the same coin*. Just as faith without works is dead (James 2:14-26), so too, repentance without works is not real repentance (Acts 26:20). Both are necessary for salvation. The moment one repents from sin and self and turns to God in faith - that's the very moment they receive Christ, are saved, born again, and birthed into the family of God.

So, what is eternal life and how do we get it?

Eternal life is the never-ending, unbroken life that belongs to those who receive Christ.

Those who repent of their sins, call upon Christ to be Lord of their lives by faith, trusting in what Jesus did on the cross to be full payment for their sins, and are born again into the family of God.

Because the Lord doesn't want you to have a hope-so salvation, I feel like it's important to conclude this segment of this study with some bullet points. Please take a minute to read through each one of these. This eternal life stuff is real. It's the most important truth you'll ever seek. Your eternity hinges on what you believe about it.

- *If you don't remember when you were saved, how do you know you are? (You might not remember the date, but, like a wedding, you could never forget the event that changed your life.)*
- *If you've never been born again, you've never truly been saved. (Sounds harsh, but being born again is not based on what I say, but on what the Bible says - even if your denomination doesn't teach it as truth.)*
- *Speaking of denominations - did you notice God's Word doesn't specify a denominational alignment in order to be saved? If you're depending on being a specific denomination, please reread the verses above and give your life to Jesus today!*
- *If you're not sure that you've been saved, you can call upon Jesus to save you right now. Don't leave this planet without knowing that you know that you're saved.*
- *Salvation doesn't happen by being religious. Jesus said, "You must be born again" to one of the most religious men of that day. Religion doesn't save. Only Jesus saves.*

This is the most important part about eternal life that you need to know. I'm begging you, don't go any further in this study unless you know that you know that you are eternally His!

2. Eternal Security - Is it biblical?

*"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God,
that you may know that you have eternal life,
and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God."*

1 John 5:13

Pssst...He really wants you to know, ya know? Not just hope you have eternal life. But know it deep down to the core.

I know I shared this verse in the first part of this lesson but perhaps this is just the place to whisper it once again. He has written so that you might believe and so that you might know that you're eternally His.

God doesn't make eternal life a guessing game. He paid much too high a price to make it available for us for Him to choose to hide it from us. So, I'm going to start with the quick answer because I don't want to leave you hanging. Yes! Eternal security is biblical. Now, let's dig in and see why - chapter and verse - precept-upon-precept.

Eternal security is based on a multitude of biblical principles threaded throughout Scripture. The sum of which a book could not contain. So, in our study, we are going to focus on 3 primary principles and the various passages that assure us that our eternity is assured. But first, let's check out some foundational verses for eternal security.

Read John 5:34 and John 6:47. Describe when eternal life becomes yours.

When examining Scripture, it's important to take into account that both the Hebrew and the Greek are verb-based languages. That means the verbs have tenses. Not just past, present, or future, but also whether or not it is a continuous action that starts at a certain point and then continues, an action that is taking place but is just for a moment, or an action that took place in the past and has a stopping point.

Here's an example of how the original language provides a much deeper understanding than what our English translation can sometimes convey:

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit" Ephesians 5:18

The verb phrases in this verse are “be not drunk” and “be filled.” The word “be” is different in the Greek.

In the first part of the verse, “be not drunk” is an inceptive verb and refers to the beginning of a process. It can be translated to say, “Don’t get drunk with wine” or “Don’t begin getting drunk.”

The second verb phrase is completely different. “Be filled with the Spirit” is an imperative verb that designates continual action. Basically it means, “Continually be filled with the Spirit.”

The difference may not seem like much, but one literally means *don’t start doing something* and the other means to *continually keep doing something*. One points to a specific beginning and ending while the other points to a never-ending action.

So, while we can understand God’s Word in our English translations, **there is so much more below the surface. We just need to take the time to dig a little deeper.**

The verbs used in John 5:34 and John 6:47, both tenses indicate something that was once initiated and is continually ongoing. Once we believe (with the kind of faith salvation requires), we *have* (possess) eternal life. John 3:36 resonates with the very same permanent truth.

Divinely framed in the power of a verb, God hushes our anxious hearts with the unchangeable truth that once we are His, we are eternally His.

So, let’s look at 2 threads of thought stitched throughout Scripture that weave together that same eternal truth.

IT’S A FAMILY THING

A family is a funny thing. Linked for a lifetime by blood that runs deep and lives that are intrinsically intertwined.

Blood - it's the tie that binds. Etched in our DNA, it fetters us together for life.

For good or bad, family is family for life. Whether near or far, whether you grew up in the same household or you've never even met your biological family, you are connected by blood. You may not be attached by relationship but you are attached relationally.

John 1:12 explains that when we receive Christ, we are given the right to be *children of God*. Galatians 3:26 tells us that we are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

When we are born again (John 3:3), we are born into the family of God. Just like a child is born into a family, we are spiritually born into God's family.

But that's not all. We are also adopted into His family.

Read Galatians 4:5, Romans 8:15-16 and Ephesians 1:5-6. Describe what these verses are saying to us in your own words. _____

I was adopted - so I get it! My mom used to tell me, "Stephanie, you weren't just expected - you were selected!" They wanted me to be part of their family. They wanted me to be their daughter.

But being adopted into the same family of one's birth is a very unusual event. That means that God very carefully and very intentionally made us *doubly His*. His by second birth and His by adoption.

I don't know your story. Where you've been...What you've been through. But the God who sent His Son to make a way for us to be doubly His is the very same God who knows everything you've been through - everything you're going through.

Perhaps you've felt disowned, abandoned, unwanted. Maybe your parents were unloving, uncaring, or just completely out of the picture. God doesn't have any orphans. You, sweet friend, need to know that God is the Father to the fatherless (Psalm 68:5), Protector of the widows. He does not leave us orphans. He comes to us. (John 14:18).

He has guaranteed that if you receive Christ, you are part of His forever family - an heir of God, a joint-heir with Jesus Christ. (Romans 8:17)

Your assurance lies in the fact that you are part of God's family. You cannot be *un-birthed* and you cannot be *un-adopted*. You can rest in the relationship Jesus died to have with you.

The thing is, salvation isn't something God gives and takes. It's not even something we can receive and give back.

FINALITY

Let's look again at verb tenses for a sec! Read 1 John 5:12 and explain who has life and who does not,

If I have life today, does that mean I won't have life tomorrow? Can you have the Son one day and not have the Son the next? Or can today be today tomorrow? I mean, if I read this Scripture tomorrow, doesn't it become today... the same day I have the Son and eternal life? The thing is, salvation isn't something God gives and takes. It's not even something we can receive and give back.

There is a finality that makes 1 John 5:13 a reality. A finality that makes it possible for you to say the very thing God wants you to be assured of - *that you know that you have eternal life* - that you can boldly declare that you know whom you have believed - that He is able to keep that which you committed unto Him until that day... that day when He returns or calls you home - not that day when you've crossed the line and sinned one too many times and He decides to take back the salvation He has given you. (2 Timothy 1:12)

There is a finality that makes losing your salvation or walking away from it an impossibility.

Read **Romans 11:29** in the Amplified Classic Edition provided below:

*“For God’s gifts and His call are irrevocable.
[He never withdraws them when once they
are given, and He does not change His mind about those to whom He gives His grace or
to whom He sends His call.]”*

Now read **2 Timothy 2:13** in the Amplified Classic Edition provided below:

*“If we are faithless [do not believe and are untrue to Him], He remains true
(faithful to His Word and His righteous character), for He cannot deny Himself.”*

Take a moment and explain what both **Romans 11:29** and **2 Timothy 2:13** teach us about the faithfulness of God and the finality of His gifts.

Overflowing from **Philippians 1:6** is the precious promise of eternal security as well.

*“being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you
will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (NKJV)*

And then there’s **Hebrews 12:2**:

*“looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy
that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame,
and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*

According to the above verses, who begins and finishes the work started in the believer?

Read **Romans 8:35-39**. Based on these verses, can anything separate you from the love of God? _____

Read **Romans 8:1** and explain when is *now* and what does it mean for you to have no condemnation right *now*?

There are oodles of verses that speak of our security in Christ but I think the most important assurance we have as a believer is the finished work of Christ on the cross, the power of God, and the guarantee given to us by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Read **John 19:30** and explain what you believe Jesus meant when He said, "*It is finished.*"

What does **Jude 24** say about who has the power to present you faultless?

Read **Ephesians 1:13-14** and describe the order of salvation and the guarantee that we are eternally His.

Finally, read **John 10:28-29**.

"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will 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."

No one has the power to take what only God can give.

Once you have truly repented of your sins and received Christ as Lord of your life, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit and you are eternally His. God doesn't forgive and then un-forgive.

Eternal security is biblical because our salvation was initiated by God, secured by Christ, and sealed by the Holy Spirit. He who began a good work in you, sweet sister, will complete it.

If you've been born again, you are eternally His. You have His Word on it! And that's final!

DIG DEEPER

While some theologians doubt the validity of eternal salvation, the vast majority of them agree. Salvation is eternal. Not some temporary condition.

Read the verses below and explain why Scripture is clear regarding eternal security. Remember to think in terms of verb tenses, original language, context, and position *in* Christ.

This will help you solidify what Scripture teaches so you can know that you know that you have eternal life. Not based on works which you have done - but based on the finished work of Christ on the cross and the eternal relationship He died to have with you.

John 3:15-18 _____

Jude 1:24 _____

1 John 2:19 _____

Galatians 3:26-27 _____

Galatians 4:6 _____

Ephesians 1:7 _____

Jude 1:1 _____

Romans 5:1-2

Romans 5:8-10

Titus 3:5-7

1 Peter 1:4-5

The salvation experience is the point of exchange - the Great Exchange!

- When your dead human spirit is made alive.
- When Christ's righteousness and holiness is imputed to you.
- When your bondage to sin and death is exchanged for freedom and life.
- When your eternal destruction is exchanged for eternal life.
- When you become a new creation and the old life is exchanged for a new life.
- When you cease being an enemy of God and become a friend of God.
- When you stop being alienated from God and become an ambassador for God.
- When you cease being separated from God and finally have peace with God.
- When your forgiveness becomes yours because Jesus became sin for you.
- When the penalty for your sin is applied to the penalty that Jesus paid for you.
- When you're adopted into God's forever family after always being excluded from it.
- When you are given the Holy Spirit who indwells you, empowers you, gifts you, and seals you until the day of redemption.

The Great Exchange is not something that happens and then un-happens. It's not something God does and then undoes based on your behavior.

The children of Israel are an example of the fact that even when they were rebellious children, they were still His children.

He chastised them. He dealt with their foolishness. He stepped back and allowed them to suffer the consequences of their own self-destructive decisions. Even after they ran after idols, He never stopped being their Father and they never stopped being His children.

God may chastise you, but He will never disown you once you are His. Once you are *in* Christ, you are positionally seated in the heavenlies and your position is permanent. (Ephesians 2:4-6)

TIDBITS:

- The Bible never gives one example of someone who lost their salvation.
- The Bible never gives one example of someone who was saved more than once.
- If God says no one can snatch you out of His hand, then how can you snatch yourself out of His hand?
- The first mention of *eternal life* is briefly referred to by David is Psalm 133:3. The second mention brings far more clarity to what eternal life is and is found in Daniel 12:1-3.

NOTES
