

# Secure in Christ

*Understanding  
Salvation  
for  
Unshakable  
Assurance*

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Centerville, Ohio

# Secure in Christ

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# IMAGES

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The name of the Lord is a fortified tower;  
the righteous run to it and are safe.  
Proverbs 18:10 NIV

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## PREFACE

In this book, I use the singular “she” when referring to an individual person. This choice is not meant to exclude males but to avoid the repetition of “he or she” or the imprecision of the plural “they.” Using “she” also creates a helpful distinction from the capitalized “He” used throughout for God, Jesus, or Holy Spirit.

Additionally, I refer to *Holy Spirit* without the definite article “the” to emphasize His personhood.

When I use “we” or “our,” I am typically referring to myself together with other believers.

Citations from other works follow a numbered selected bibliography, formatted as:

**SB#<number>, <author’s last name>, p. <page number>**

For example, a reference to the first source's page 27 listed in the bibliography would appear as:

**SB#1, Gilmore, p. 27**

I brought passion and insight to this book, God inspired me to understand His truth, and I used AI Copilot to edit, enhance, and clarify certain ideas, sentences, and paragraphs. All content and creative decisions are my own.

### Why I Wrote *Secure In Christ*

God chose me on a Saturday evening in July 1991. God's causing of my spiritual birth was unmistakable. I was unable to believe one moment and I knew God was real the next. God opened my mind and heart so that I could see Him. I will always cherish this decisive and instantaneous transformation. When the reality of this world becomes confusing, it keeps me hopefully grounded in God's reality.

To put it plainly, my purpose is the same as John's:

**I write 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 NIV**





# PART 1

## ***Union In Christ Secures Salvation***

From the moment we trust in Jesus, the cornerstone by which we measure everything, we are spiritually joined to His life, death, and resurrection. This union places us in Christ's righteousness and adopts us into God's family, securing our standing before the Father. Our salvation rests entirely on His perfect work, not on our own merit.



# CHAPTER 1

## ***What Problem Does Salvation Solve?***

Salvation is the gift of spiritual life—a new birth that brings peace, joy, and an everlasting relationship with God. But what if worldly ideas have distorted your understanding of it?

Has Jesus rescued you from spiritual death into His life and light, only for you to live in fear of returning to darkness? Jesus cures spiritual blindness, making a return to darkness impossible.

When salvation is rightly understood, you can fully embrace the life-changing gift God has provided through Christ. It cannot be obtained or retained through human effort. Salvation is secure because it is entirely the work of Holy Spirit, who lives and works within every believer.

### **ASSURANCE OF SALVATION IS ESSENTIAL**

Salvation is a matter of eternal life and death—its significance cannot be overstated. Because salvation is spiritual life, both awareness and assurance of that life confirm its authenticity.

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Consider Steve, who believed he had to earn God's favor anew each day. Every misstep deepened his doubt in his salvation. He was consumed by fear—until he encountered the truth of God's grace. Once he realized that salvation is secure in Christ, he finally found peace, liberated from the exhausting cycle of performance-based faith.

How often do we live like Steve, even while believing differently? We affirm grace with our lips, but do we rest in it with our hearts? How many of us live under the shadow of fear, measuring ourselves against a standard we've already been freed from?

### **ASSURANCE: THE COMPANION OF SALVATION**

Life is challenging enough without believing salvation is fragile. A wavering view of salvation undermines the peace and security of God's love. Imagine waking up each day with a knot of anxiety and doubt, wondering if you are "good enough" to keep your salvation. Now contrast this with rising each morning fully assured of God's unchanging love and faithfulness. That assurance flows from trusting that God's heart overflows with fierce love for you as His child.

Life often feels like a journey upstream. But salvation is not an uncertain midpoint between hell and heaven. God does not abandon us halfway home, watching from a distance as we paddle toward eternal life. Instead, He steps into the canoe with us, empowering and guiding us through life's currents. The journey may be turbulent, but with God leading, it cannot fail.

To be saved is to rest in God's complete rescue—to trust Him not only to **provide** the way, but to **be** the way. The alternative is a life marked by spiritual insecurity: fear and inadequate striving to gain His favor. We cannot fully trust God when we quietly suspect He may leave us behind.

## **ASSURANCE: SALVATION PROTECTS THE MIND**

God considers the security of salvation to be like a helmet—armor designed to protect the head from attack (Ephesians 6:17). Therefore, understanding salvation accurately is a defensive maneuver commanded by God. Too many people have holes in their helmet. But, because we are destined for eternal peace with God, we need not be plagued with daily anxieties. Instead, God wants us filled with hope.

But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Thessalonians 5:8-9 ESV

## **ASSURANCE: THE GOSPEL HEALS INSECURITY**

This book is a heartfelt journey into how the Gospel heals spiritual insecurity—a burden many people carry, despite God's unfailing love. The Bible's central message is simple yet profound: salvation is a free, irrevocable gift rooted in Christ's unchanging work, not in people's flawed efforts. The Gospel assures believers of God's steadfast love, no matter their fears, doubts, or struggles. This book seeks to illuminate the depth and permanence of God's love, dispelling the anxiety and uncertainty that often cloud faith.

Spiritual insecurity, guilt, and shame stem from flawed theology that misunderstands salvation. Many struggle with the fear that their imperfections could separate them from God. But shifting from trusting in self-effort to fully relying on the sufficiency of Christ's once-and-for-all sacrifice, produces assurance and joy.

As a professional counselor, I've witnessed how relying on self breeds fear, doubt, and insecurity. Motivated by a desire to showcase the incredible reality of God's love, I wrote this book to provide clarity and hope. With both theological depth and

pastoral care, I want it to serve as a lifeline for those longing for peace and security in their relationship with God. Through scriptural evidence, theological insights, and practical examples, you will see how God's faithful solution to sin assures believers of their eternal salvation.

My prayer is that this book assures you of God's unwavering love, unbreakable promises, and irrevocable salvation. May it guide you to walk boldly in the joy and freedom of His grace. Together, let's explore how the Gospel transforms hearts, heals spiritual wounds, and brings lasting assurance to all who believe.

## THE CONSEQUENCES OF MISUNDERSTANDING SALVATION

Misunderstanding salvation doesn't just lead to confusion—it brings life-altering consequences that ripple through every aspect of a believer's spiritual and emotional well-being. Pursuing the correct understanding of the Gospel should be a believer's top priority. Consider these two extreme distortions:

1. **Expecting more than the Gospel promises:** Assuming everyone will be saved or treating eternal life as an offer rather than a gift, can lead to a non-believer's false assurance of salvation. This view undermines God's initiative in choosing people for salvation.
2. **Expecting less than the Gospel promises:** Believing that salvation can be lost, or doubting its security, results in a weakened trust in God's love. This can leave true believers mired in uncertainty and fear.

Salvation is not conditional upon human effort to stay faithful; it is secured entirely by Christ. Doubting its permanence shifts the focus from God's faithfulness to our own performance, leading to unnecessary fear.

## WHAT'S AT STAKE?

The quality of life and the believer's witness to God's kingdom are at stake. Weakened trust in God can manifest in the believer's life as any of the following:

- Compromised mental and emotional health: anxiety, low self-worth, shame, guilt, and despair.
- Distance from God: believing the lie that He is indifferent to believers' sense of well-being.
- Short-sighted perspective: prioritizing earthly matters more than eternal matters.

The negative consequences of believing that salvation can be lost are deeply concerning:

- Consuming fear and worry: "Does God accept or reject me?"
- Compulsive focus on performance: "Am I doing enough to earn salvation?"
- Continuous self-doubt: "Am I good enough?"
- Confusion over outcomes: "Am I responsible for saving people, or is God?"

A believer preoccupied with doubts about her salvation may fail to reflect the fullness of God's Good News to others. The Gospel isn't **okay-I-think-I-am-saved** news or **terrible-I-thought-I-was-saved-but-now-it's-too-late** news. The Gospel is **amazing-I-know-I-am-saved** news.

## THEOLOGY AFFECTS EMOTIONAL HEALTH

Good theology is a correct view of God. Good emotional health is a correct view of self. Both are essential for victorious living.

Bad theology will lead to poor mental and emotional health. A lack of understanding what the Bible says combined with blindly trusting other people or institutions to interpret the Bible can lead to a negative self-worth. For example, beliefs like "God might terminate salvation", "God expects people to earn salvation", or "God doesn't care about people" can produce emotional

conclusions like "I am alone in my journey toward salvation", "My situation is hopeless", or "I am unlovable." We should study the Bible individually and learn from other biblical teachers, but then test the spirit of the teaching by listening to Holy Spirit who helps us see the correct meaning.

Good theology starts with an accurate understanding of the Gospel. The Gospel is the foundation for understanding and interpreting other less-central passages. If the Gospel understanding is wrong, everything else will be wrong. If the Gospel has been interpreted correctly, it is difficult to misinterpret less-central passages.

When seeking to understand the main message of the Bible, it's important to see the big picture message. This is done by recognizing how the Bible speaks to foundational truths across many verses, chapters, and books. The Bible does not contradict itself, so passages that seem to be presenting differing ideas must be studied in context and reconciled to a coherent teaching.

The Gospel is the foundation for mental and emotional health. Accurate understanding of who God is leads to healthy thinking, feeling, and actions. But misguided understanding wastes precious effort. For example, believing that God's acceptance is conditional upon performance will encourage a fear-based relationship with God. This bad theology leads to a need to ask, "Have I performed sufficiently today to remain in good standing with God?" Then, because no one is perfect, it is easy for the next thought to be, "God is disappointed with me. My sin was too great today. My efforts were not enough. God will abandon me."

Notice the subtle, but significant, shift from relying on God's power to self-effort. One is cooperation with God's initiative, the other, operating alone.

The grave reality of this bad theology becomes even clearer when we consider the consequences of not performing. What happens if performance is not good enough? What is our official status before God? To have to seriously and continually ask this will become a source of debilitating anxiety. Have you ever found yourself feeling this way—wondering if God's love could



## What Problem Does Salvation Solve?

run out? The Bible says that Jesus's sacrifice is sufficient to cover all sin and imperfections for all time (Hebrews 10:12-14).

Bad theology says that God might remove a person's salvation, so that she is no longer a child of God. Such a consequence would be traumatizing because it would mean being abandoned by God.

Bad theology also says that a true believer can remove her own salvation. This is impossible because no one, after knowing God's love, would want to end her relationship with Him.

Imagine believing that it's possible that God can change His mind, break His promise to never abandon us, and revoke His love. The consequences on our mental and emotional health would be devastating. Then, living in constant fear would be normal.

God is better than we are at dealing with how our hearts are both deceived and deceitful. He is gentler on us than we are on ourselves. He is the good shepherd that searches our hearts to find offensive ways (Psalm 23, 139). This is not to bring judgment and condemnation; it is to pull out sin splinters lodged in our hearts. Jesus came to save—to bring relief from the burden of sin (John 3:17-18).

## EMOTIONAL HEALTH AFFECTS THEOLOGY

Negative life experiences might cause changes in personal theology. The depressed or anxious believer might start to doubt God's steadfast love for her. Despite the truth of God's Word, believers can adopt a distorted view of God when they are beaten down by traumatic events. For example, having an abusive father might result in a heart-felt belief "I am unlovable" which can produce bad theology like "God does not care about people" or "God cannot love a defective person like me."

Assurance of eternal life is a quality of life concern. The person who cannot feel assurance and know she is saved will suffer poor emotional and spiritual health.

Signs of spiritual sickness can start with feeling no choice but to compromise on biblical teaching to reconcile it with tragic life experiences. Unexplainable losses, such as the death of a

## SECURE IN CHRIST

spouse early in life, can turn hearts against God, causing people to doubt if God is real or that He cares. If this crisis of faith hasn't happened to you personally, chances are you know someone who seems like she has more to endure than she can bear.

Mental and emotional health concerns can significantly lower assurance, creating unnecessary suffering. The only way to heal is to apply correct theology with conviction, trusting God's truth more than negative experiences. As difficult as life can be sometimes, God expects us to hold fast to the truth of His integrity and faithfulness. To compromise on God is to lose everything.

Growing in truth about Jesus will increase assurance, while distance from Him will decrease assurance. This doesn't mean that low assurance is the believer's sole responsibility—as if an instant "fix" is available by working harder, being more disciplined, or simply thinking positively. Assurance is not earned through better discipline—it is received by resting fully in God's unchanging promises.

A believer should not compare her faith walk against other believers. She must run her God-appointed race. Everyone starts at a different place and faces different circumstances. Furthermore, appearances can be deceiving. Only God knows the depth of pain in each person's heart.

Low assurance indicates that God's love has not yet penetrated deeply enough into the believer's heart. To grow in assurance, she must cooperate with Holy Spirit to remove the barriers that block the truth from taking root. If her theology is solid, then personal wounds—such as experiences of abuse or neglect—may be preventing God's truth from fully shaping her perspective. What happens to us can feel more real than God's truth.

The problem isn't God's love but rather a misplaced focus away from God and onto self. This can lead to an incomplete train of thought:

1. God is powerful and perfect.
2. I am weak and inadequate.
3. God didn't fail, I did.
4. God rejects me because I am not good enough.

## What Problem Does Salvation Solve?

While these statements contain truth, dwelling on personal inadequacy rather than God's sufficiency weakens assurance. We cannot save ourselves, so when our focus remains on sin and self instead of Christ's completed work, we struggle to recognize the high value God places on us. The Gospel completes the story by adding:

5. Christ's sacrifice reconciles my relationship with God, fully restoring His acceptance of me.

Spiritually, the enemy works to destabilize assurance—causing believers to doubt their relationship with God and feel uncertain about their salvation. He also deceives non-believers into a false confidence, leading them to presume salvation without genuine faith or surrender.

A believer can be saved yet allow lies and circumstances to interfere with assurance. Conversely, false assurance is possible—non-believers may assume they are saved when they are not. The key difference lies in trust: authentic assurance thrives when faith rests fully in God's sufficiency rather than human effort.

### **Anxiety And Doubt Are Optional**

One of the ways God relates to us is by providing comfort. God does not want us to be afraid. He wants us to be confident in His strength. Doubt is related to fear; the person who doubts stops seeing God as strong and in control.

Many beliefs are implicit. This means it is possible to believe something strongly but, at the same time, not be fully aware of what you believe or why you believe it. You might think you know what you believe but it is your actions that reveal what you actually believe. For example, it is possible to know the truth that Jesus is gentle but live in fear of judgement because your heart has yet to fully grasp this truth.

When we verbalize what we believe, we expose hidden distortions and allow God's truth to correct them. This is why it is important to make beliefs explicit. This is done by externalizing them through writing, speaking or some other form of expression. When you put your beliefs into words, you become more

aware of how the "truth" in your heart differs from the truth in the Bible.

God is always on your side, and His perfect love eliminates fear for the true believer. Anxiety is essentially fear. Because He is love, everything He does in your life is meant to reduce anxiety and increase trust in Him—even when trials make this hard to see. While suffering is inevitable for Christians, fear and doubt are not; God matures His children by driving away fear, providing unlimited peace through His presence (1 John 4:18). Scripture affirms that anxiety does not come from God—His desire is for His people to experience lasting peace and joy through Holy Spirit.

Insecurity is optional because God has given us everything we need to overcome it (2 Peter 1:3, 2 Timothy 1:7). Spiritual insecurity stems from misinterpreting the Bible's teaching on salvation. Salvation is not dependent on our perfection but on God's unchanging promises and perfect love. When lies take root in our hearts—whispering that our failures or sins outweigh God's grace—they distort the truth of the Gospel. To overcome insecurity, believers must reject these lies and realign their focus on the unshakable truth of God's character and the finished work of Christ

## **THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF UNDERSTANDING SALVATION**

Salvation is not simply one option among many—it is the ultimate and only solution to humanity's most profound problem. It goes beyond merely providing a potential fix; it is God intervening to rescue us from our desperate condition.

### **THE PROBLEM: HUMANITY'S SEPARATION FROM GOD**

Everyone is born into a broken state:

- Enslaved to sin
- Spiritually dead and orphaned

## What Problem Does Salvation Solve?

- An enemy of God

These realities highlight a serious and urgent problem: each person is born cut off from the only One who can save them. The consequences are fatal, leaving humanity spiritually adrift, without hope or purpose (Romans 3:23).

### **THE SOLUTION: A NEW LIFE UNITED TO CHRIST**

Salvation is nothing less than a rescue—a deliverance from a life destined for destruction to a life that will endure forever. As Scripture assures:

**For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

**Romans 6:23 ESV**

Through salvation, believers are reborn into an entirely new existence:

- Freed from sin and enslaved to righteousness
- Spiritually alive and welcomed as God's child
- Brought into an eternal friendship with God

This transformation isn't partial or temporary; it is comprehensive and everlasting. Salvation addresses the problem of separation from God completely, providing reconciliation and restored relationship with Him.

When a person is born spiritually, she goes through a significant transformation. It might appear subtle on the outside, but it won't be subtle inside her heart and mind. To have God living with you and showing you His spiritual reality is a radical way of life.

Understanding the Gospel is the key to understanding all of life. It provides that sure and steady anchor for the soul. Every believer should be encouraged, her heart at rest, by answers to the following questions:

- Is God's love unconditional or conditional?
- Am I wanted by Him or unwanted?

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- Is my existence intentional and significant, or random and arbitrary?
- Will I be in heaven, or might I still end up in hell?
- Does emphasizing free will become a liability or an asset to my spiritual journey?

The positive consequences of seeing that the Gospel teaches that believers are secure in Jesus Christ are profoundly amazing good news:

- God can be trusted.
- Knowing God's love provides secure emotional attachment.
- Significance and hope conserve energy to channel into God's kingdom agenda instead of wasting time worrying about how to be good enough for God.
- Consistent peace and confidence from knowing that only God has the power to save people, means sharing the Gospel message without worrying about outcomes.

Because salvation is unshakable, believers can confidently rest in God's love, knowing that their future is secure. This removes fear and provides the foundation for a life of peace and purpose.

Ultimately, anxiety and worry stem from weakened trust in God—consequences that vanish when believers embrace the Gospel's promise of eternal security. Believers who are confident in their faith in God will experience perfect peace. Worry is only possible when doubt weakens faith.

**You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.**

**Isaiah 26:3 NIV**

By fully understanding and embracing the truth of salvation, believers can move past fear and doubt to live a life of steadfast peace and confident faith in God's unwavering love.

## OVERVIEW OF TOPICS COVERED

This book defends the security of biblical salvation by exploring it from beginning to end in four parts. Together, they highlight God's purpose for salvation and how we can confidently trust in its permanence. The first half (Parts 1 and 2) focuses on the details of daily Christian living. The second half explores the bigger picture of eternity past (Part 3) and future (Part 4). The past and future must be understood correctly to comprehend God's complete intentions for salvation.

Each chapter focuses on a specific question with the overall goal to strengthen assurance of God's redemptive plan. The foundational questions in Part 1 establish the framework for understanding salvation. Part 2 explains how God leads believers to grow in Christ, confirming their salvation. Part 3 dives deeper, exploring the divine and human roles in salvation, the true nature of freedom, and the challenges posed by free will. Part 4 concludes with how God uses love, evil, and suffering to deepen our understanding of salvation. His complete solution to sin ensures we experience glory, not suffering, forever in the next life with Him.

## FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Read about Sarah's journey to find assurance of her salvation, then answer the questions at the end.

### **Sarah's Journey**

Sarah had always struggled with feeling unworthy of God's love. As a child, she internalized the belief that her value was tied to obedience due to her parents' obsession with responsibility. As an adult, she carried that weight into her view of God as Father.

When her marriage began to falter, her sense of adequacy crumbled. Her thoughts weighed on her, an avalanche of doubt and insecurity, and soon, her uncertainty about herself became uncertainty about God. She thought, *If I was a better wife, maybe this wouldn't be happening. If I were a stronger Christian,*

*maybe God would bless my marriage. Was I ever truly saved? Maybe I only thought I had faith, but my failures prove I don't.* The anxiety consumed her, making prayer difficult and Scripture confusing. Sunday's sermon on God's forgiveness seemed directed at others, not her. Fear shouted that she had somehow fallen outside of God's grace—that salvation was for those who had it together, and she clearly didn't.

One evening, while searching for something to hold onto, Sarah opened her Bible to Ephesians 2. She read the words,

**It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.**

She read them again.

**It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.**

Holy Spirit helped her understand this truth—not as an idea she had heard before, but as a reality she had not fully understood and embraced. God's grace had never been about her ability to perform. Salvation had never depended on her strength or perfection. It had always been entirely God's gift.

At first, this truth felt distant, almost too good to be true. Could she really trust it? The doubts didn't disappear overnight, nor did her fears. But the more she reflected on God's promises, the more she realized that doubts do not define her faith. Instead, God is the source of faith—He gave her the insight that faith is spiritual, not fleshly. She felt hope deep within. Instead of spiraling into uncertainty, she started bringing her questions to God rather than avoiding Him.

Day by day, Sarah began uncovering her faith, looking beyond her fluctuating emotions and failures, to the unshakable certainty of God's character. She wrote down scriptures about God's promises and reminded herself that His love was based on His nature, not her performance. She still struggled—she still had moments of fear—but now, she had a foundation to stand on when insecurity crept in.



## What Problem Does Salvation Solve?

As weeks passed, her mindset changed. She no longer saw salvation as a fragile state she could lose. She began to experience true peace, not because life was perfect, but because she finally understood that God's love was unbreakable. She realized she had a real relationship with a Father who really cares. Slowly, she embraced the freedom that comes with trusting God completely, and joy followed.

### Conclusion

Assurance does not mean being free from hardship; it means knowing that nothing—no doubt, no sin, no weakness—could undo the finished work of Christ. Without assurance, faith feels unstable—always dependent on performance rather than grace. But when salvation is fully understood as unbreakable, it leads to deep joy and lasting confidence. Like Sarah, you too can find freedom, strength, and assurance in the truth of the Gospel.

### Questions

1. Are you afraid of losing your salvation? Why or why not, and how does that shape your relationship with God?
2. What problem does salvation solve?
3. What are some common misconceptions about salvation, and how can believers guard against them?
4. If salvation is a helmet meant to protect you, what condition is yours in? Is it strong and secure, or does it feel fragile?
5. In what ways have negative life experiences impacted your understanding of salvation or God's love?
6. Have struggles with mental or emotional health ever led you to doubt God's faithfulness? How have you worked through those doubts?
7. How can a solid theological foundation positively impact mental and emotional health?
8. In what ways does Satan attempt to undermine assurance, and how can believers resist his lies?
9. How much are you truly enjoying your salvation? What does it mean to fully embrace it, and how might fear or insecurity block that joy?

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10. How could understanding salvation as a gift rather than an achievement change the way you live out your faith?
11. Why is assurance of salvation crucial for spiritual growth and personal peace?
12. How do you balance faith and feelings when doubts arise? What practices help realign your heart with truth?

# CHAPTER 2

## *What Is Salvation?*

Can you be certain of your salvation right now, or is it something you must wait until the afterlife to confirm? Is salvation a gift that is immediate and complete, or does it need to grow and mature before it becomes effective enough to save you? Is the process of gaining salvation reversible?

These questions stir fear and doubt in some believers, leaving them anxious about their standing with God. But Scripture proclaims a clear and comforting answer: salvation is synonymous with spiritual birth, a robust and instantaneous transformation. It is God's work alone, fully effective from the start and made to endure forever.

### **SALVATION IS RADICAL TRANSFORMATION**

The Bible uses many terms to describe spiritual birth which highlight different aspects of salvation's miraculous transformation:

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- being saved
- new birth, second birth
- becoming a new creation
- being born again, being born from above
- being adopted
- regeneration (being made spiritually alive)

New birth is something to be celebrated because it is a complete solution—it cannot be improved. Unlike human efforts that require progress, salvation is complete at the moment of spiritual birth because it originates entirely from God's work, not ours. Salvation solves humanity's sin problem but also provides so much more with eternal life.

### SALVATION IS LIFE EVERLASTING

Being saved, having salvation, and possessing eternal life are all one and the same. The Greek word *aionios* in Romans 6:23 (and many other verses) means "everlasting," "unending," "forever," or "ceaseless."<sup>1</sup>

**For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

**Romans 6:23 ESV**

Salvation is for people in life-threatening danger who are helpless to do anything to provide their own rescue. From what threats do all people need to be saved?

- Death, sin, and evil
- Despair, fear, and anger
- Destruction of self and others

These are not isolated threats, but symptoms of separation from the Source of eternal life and goodness. Therefore, the primary danger is remaining forever trapped in temporary life.

God saves us from ourselves (Romans 5:6, 6:23, 7:24-25) for His purposes (Ephesians 2:9-10). We are saved from the death that we earned. We were helpless orphans (spiritually speaking)

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1. <https://biblehub.com/greek/166.htm>

## What Is Salvation?

and enemies of God. But we rejoice because God chooses to save us in our weakness (1 Corinthians 1:26-31).

There are three perspectives of salvation from where we stand today, two thousand years after God resurrected Jesus:

1. **Past:** Jesus has already secured salvation for all who believe. He declared, "It is finished" immediately before His death (John 19:28-30).
2. **Present:** Believers experience eternal life today because Holy Spirit dwells inside of them (Ephesians 1:13-14).
3. **Future:** Holy Spirit is a deposit toward the future reality of heaven. Believers don't yet have all of the benefits of salvation, such as a new body that will last forever. But believers hope for them, waiting patiently (Romans 8:20-25).

Every believer must consider salvation as "I am already saved" (past), "I am being saved" (present), and "I will be saved" (future). From God's perspective outside of time, salvation is already completely finished. This is clearly presented by what is called the golden chain of salvation:

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Romans 8:29-30 ESV

Salvation is unbreakable because it is already accomplished (past tense). God foreknew, predestined, called, justified, and glorified believers. Salvation starts before the creation of the world and continues uninterrupted until it is completed. This means God works in the life of a person both before and after she believes. Before she believes, He works to bring about the circumstances which lead to her belief. This ensures that no one will "accidentally" be left out of heaven.

## **SALVATION IS A FREE GIFT**

Salvation is a gift, not an offer. A gift has a specific giver and a specific recipient. An offer is available to all. A gift has an intended name written on it. A gift is initiated and fulfilled by the giver, requiring no effort to receive it. An offer is initiated by the giver but fulfilled by the recipient. An offer is worthless until it is claimed.

Many misunderstand salvation as something they must claim or activate, but Scripture shows that it is a direct gift from God, given without condition. Perhaps you have received one of those coupons in the mail addressed to both "previous owner" and "current resident"? The coupon is an offer that must be claimed and redeemed. Salvation is not like that. Salvation arrives as an announcement, "Welcome to God's family!"

Salvation requires faith to be of any benefit. Not everyone has the faith. That's why salvation is a gift. God gives the gift of salvation along with faith to enjoy it. Salvation and faith are inseparable. Having one means having the other. Therefore, God cannot grant them independent of each other. Salvation without faith would be like having a bank account without the password. The money is there, but never accessible. Faith without salvation would be like having the password without the bank account. Access is possible but there is no money.

**Faith is an extension of God's power rather than the exertion of human egos. Our faith in the Gospel, our commitment to Christ, is what God initiates in us. Faith is the result of divine action, a supernatural gifting. SB#1, Gilmore, p. 27**

Faith is 100% spiritual; it originates solely from God, making it beyond human effort to manufacture. When Jesus tells people they have "so little faith", He is not blaming them for lack of effort, He is bringing awareness to their focus on the physical at the expense of the spiritual. To grow in faith means to grow as a *spiritual* being. Holy Spirit fosters spiritual growth by helping believers see Jesus as trustworthy because He is loving, powerful, and in control.

## What Is Salvation?

Just as faith cannot be earned or manufactured, salvation also comes freely as a gift. Salvation must be free because no one can afford to buy it. Free means no payment is required now or ever (no strings attached). God, being a perfect loving Father, knows how to give good gifts (Matthew 7:9-11). Without God's generous gift, we will get what we deserve: death.

God knows that we cannot repay Him for His gift. His gift is unconditional; He will not, under any circumstances, take back His gift (John 6:37). God's gift is a well-thought-out plan. He does not experience buyer's remorse with respect to those He saves. That's because He knows everyone He creates and chooses them even before they are born (Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:11-13).

### **SALVATION IS BEING A NEW CREATION**

A human gift might be returnable, but God's gifts are life-altering and therefore non-returnable. The Bible speaks of the old becoming new, but never the new becoming old.

**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.**

**2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV**

Becoming a new creation, made possible by Holy Spirit, is not just a change in status like a new job title; it is an infusion of God's spiritual life—His resurrection power—into a spiritually dead person. Once God reveals the reality of who He is, belief is instantaneous. Before salvation is like being blind with a light on; sight remains impossible. After salvation, Jesus has cured spiritual blindness making sight is automatic—no effort is required. If you have experienced this radical transformation, then Scripture assures that you:

- have crossed over from death to life, darkness to light (John 5:24, Colossians 1:13).
- have left behind perishable life to gain imperishable life (1 Peter 1).
- are alive to Christ and dead to sin (Romans 6:8-11).

Salvation is not only a one-time moment of renewal but an ongoing journey of transformation. Day by day, believers are inwardly renewed by God's Spirit, reflecting His glory and growing in likeness to Christ (2 Corinthians 4:16). This continuous renewal underscores the depth and permanence of the believer's new identity.

### **A New Identity And Purpose**

As a new creation, believers are given a profound new identity. No longer defined by sin or separation, they are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works prepared in advance (Ephesians 2:10). Moreover, they are entrusted with a divine calling as ambassadors for Christ, carrying the message of reconciliation to the world (2 Corinthians 5:20).

This transformation does not merely change what believers **do** but who they **are**. Their new identity causes them to function differently. As new creations they are no longer conformed to the patterns of this world but are instead transformed by the renewing of their minds, able to discern God's will (Romans 12:2).

This new life stands in stark contrast to the old, which is marked by separation, enmity, and darkness. Believers no longer belong to the world but are called out of it to live in the light of Christ, shining as His witnesses.

The difference between the old and the new is as striking as the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly. Just as a caterpillar undergoes an irreversible change to become something new, beautiful, and free, so believers are transformed through salvation. Salvation, like the butterfly's new form, is the manifestation of God's creative and sustaining power, forever altering the believer's spiritual DNA.

Salvation is not like clothing that can be removed or lost. Eternal life is woven into the very fabric of a believer's identity as a new creation. To be made spiritually new is to have eternal life encoded in a person's spiritual DNA.



## **SALVATION IS PERMANENT**

The gift of salvation brings about permanent transformation. The eternal life that Jesus gives is not temporary—it is irrevocable. God gives eternal life, not a life that fades or fails. For this reason, the saved person will never perish spiritually. Eternal life cannot be lost because God's promises are unbreakable. He has sworn to save His children, and His word is utterly reliable (Hebrews 6:13-20).

Salvation, or new birth, is like a one-way switch. Once God flips you to saved, you can never be turned off again. It remains locked on, unchanging and secure, powered entirely by Christ's effort.

Assurance, however, is like a dimmer switch: it may brighten or fade based on your perspective, emotions, or understanding of God's truth. But the presence of doubt doesn't change the reality of salvation any more than a dim light changes the fact that the power is on. Assurance does not determine salvation—it only indicates how clearly a believer perceives it. Just as a dim light does not mean the power is off, faded assurance does not mean salvation has disappeared.

The believer will persevere because of her new, God-given nature. Holy Spirit is permanently present in her life, a sure sign that God will never abandon or forsake her (Hebrews 13:5; Deuteronomy 31:6). The old way of life is not only dead but irretrievable, lost forever. There is no going back to what once was. Even when struggles arise, the believer cannot spiritually return to who she was before salvation. Her identity has been permanently rewritten in Christ.

Just as biological life is alive from conception, so too is spiritual life. Whether a person is born from the womb or by the Spirit above, she cannot reverse the process to become "unborn" (John 3:6). What is born of God's imperishable seed, His enduring Word, will remain imperishable for eternity:

**Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; for**

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**“All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.”**

**And this word is the good news that was preached to you.**

**1 Peter 1:22-25 ESV**

Our fleshly bodies will fade away, but the new spiritual life given by God's Word endures forever. Jesus vividly describes eternal life as a permanent passage from death to life. Consider the absolute terms He uses:

**I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.**

**John 5:24 NLT**

Believers:

- have eternal life (already)
- will never be condemned
- have already passed from death to life

Believers are born from above by God's will and God guards them by His power (John 1:12-13). Jesus holds us securely (1 Peter 3:5). The evil one cannot remove our salvation.

**For every child of God defeats this evil world. We know that God's children do not make a practice of sinning, for God's Son holds them securely, and the evil one cannot touch them.**

**1 John 5:4, 18 NLT**

New birth is a miraculous transformation, and its permanence rests entirely on God's power. Salvation is not something we can initiate or maintain through our efforts; it is God who ensures that His children are forever safe from all spiritual harm.

## **SALVATION IS COMPLETE INTEGRATION WITH CHRIST**

Jesus is the whole body, including its members—the true believers. After becoming a new creation, a believer is permanently joined to the body of Christ. She becomes part of Him in an inseparable union. To remove her would be like Christ mutilating His own body—a concept contrary to His love and care. Just as Christ commands husbands to love their wives as their own bodies, He tenderly cares for His church, His body (Ephesians 5:21-33).

## **SALVATION IS UNITY WITH JESUS**

At the heart of salvation is a profound mystery: the believer's unity with Jesus. Through this union, she shares in everything He has: His life, His victory, and His eternal inheritance. At the moment of spiritual birth, Holy Spirit dwells within her, uniting her with Jesus and making her a new creation (John 1:12). This union manifests eternal life, instantly granting saving faith, a new relationship with God, and spiritual power.

To visualize this unity, imagine being wholly enveloped in Christ's embrace—a secure and unbreakable bond where His life surrounds a believer entirely. God places the believer into Christ, wrapping her in His love and victory, while Holy Spirit fills her within, illuminating her heart with truth and power (John 14:20). She has become inseparably bound to Jesus's life. Because He has conquered death, she shares in His eternal victory. Jesus lives forever and so will she.

When our hearts are aligned with His, we can live in ways that genuinely please Him. In this unity, we function not only as participants in the divine nature but also as members of the divine huddle, working in harmony with the Trinity.

Knowing God in an intimate way requires a union with Jesus. Believers' union with Christ is absolutely essential. Anyone who desires the blessings of Christ apart from a relationship with Him, will suffer disappointment. Jesus's sacrifice, complete

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payment for spiritual debt, and reconciliation to God only apply to those in a relationship with Him.

This miraculous union transforms the believer's nature. Although the sinful flesh persists, her spirit, united with Jesus, is like God in its essence and cannot sin (Romans 7-8). Her spirit will not abuse the freedom found in Jesus, despite the rebellion desired by her flesh. She is now controlled by the Spirit, not by sin. She is not condemned; Christ bore that condemnation, and through His death, sin's power over her has been broken.

For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh... You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

Romans 8:3, 9 ESV

Salvation is inseparable from Jesus Himself. God does not give eternal life apart from Christ; rather, He gives His Son, and with Him, all the benefits of salvation. Simply put, if you have Christ, you have eternal life. If you don't, you don't (SB#2, Ferguson, p. 45).

Holy Spirit's presence provides faith, justification, and adoption to the believer all at once:

- **Saving Faith:** The ability to see Jesus rightly, recognize the truth of the Gospel, and trust in Him as Savior and Lord.
- **Justification:** God credits Jesus's righteousness to the believer, making her right in His sight.
- **Adoption:** The believer becomes God's child, a part of His family, and a member of the body of Christ.

With Holy Spirit's indwelling, the believer is empowered to bear spiritual fruit. She gains the ability to repent of sin, choose righteous behavior, and endure trials. These actions are evidence of her salvation, though not its cause:

- **Repentance:** Agree with God that sin is wrong, feel it to be undesirable, and confess it.

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- **Sanctification:** Holy Spirit shapes the believer's character into Christ's righteous character, in a lifelong pursuit of spiritual maturity.
- **Perseverance:** Endure trials and remain faithful until the end of earthly life, culminating in a glorified body.

God provides saving faith, justification, and adoption completely at one time, so they do not need to be pursued. Saving faith and "unbelief" are opposed to each other. Therefore, unbelief is no longer considered, measured, or possible. There can be doubt, struggle, and sin, but not unbelief that could negate faith or salvation. For example, a believer might question how a good God can let bad things happen, but won't stop believing.

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

Philippians 2:12-13 NIV

A believer's life is a work in progress, only moving forward into greater freedom and holiness, never backward into spiritual death. The "fear and trembling" reflect the awe and reverence believers feel during sanctification—the magnitude of God's operation being similar to undergoing life-saving surgery. Believers are witnesses to the extraordinary power of God as He works in them to guarantee complete sanctification. Believers should remain ever aware and amazed at God's desire to use His power to fulfill His good purposes in and through them.

## SALVATION IS JESUS WITH US

God's story is a revelation of who He is, inviting us to know and understand Him. Jesus is actively working within us, and we have a "front row seat" to witness His truth and power. As responders to truth—not creators of it—we observe and testify to what God is doing both in the world and in our hearts. Through Holy Spirit, who dwells within us, God trains us to reject the desires of the flesh and live according to His Spirit.

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We are empowered to live the spiritual life because God lives for us (Galatians 2:20). Holy Spirit works in us in real-time, showing us how to live and enabling us to accomplish good works. Witnessing the Spirit's active presence in our lives reminds us of God's unwavering faithfulness and power.

At the moment God unites us with Himself, He brings about a complete transformation. All of the following happen simultaneously:

- God gives Holy Spirit.
- God regenerates (revives) the spiritually dead, transferring them from darkness to light, from death to life.
- God causes spiritual birth.
- God grants eternal life.
- God gives faith to recognize and believe that Jesus is Lord and Savior.
- God gives the right to become His child.
- God adopts the believer into His family.

These changes happen all at once, securing the believer's eternal destiny in Christ. None occur before or after salvation—they are inseparable components of the moment God causes salvation. They happen together because God gives us all of Christ, including associated benefits. Our eternal security comes only from our union with Christ, not from any of our efforts.

Salvation invites a response, but emotions or human will cannot alter the spiritual transformation. Holy Spirit sustains the believer spiritually, making her alive—like a permanently built-in battery that never loses energy. The expected responses to so great a salvation are profound and simple:

- worship
- repentance
- continuous belief
- faith actions, good deeds
- obedience
- perseverance, endurance, faithfulness

Holy Spirit empowers believers to actively participate in these spiritual activities. By cooperating with the Spirit, the

## What Is Salvation?

regenerated believer can bear fruit and accomplish good works that glorify God.

### SALVATION IS RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS

Salvation is more than a theological concept. God does not only rescue us; He invites us into deep intimacy with Him. At its heart, salvation is a personal relationship that allows us to know God intimately through Jesus—both in our hearts and minds—as we experience His love and grace. This relationship secures our place as His children in His family.

And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

John 17:3 ESV

Knowing God is not merely an intellectual pursuit but a deeply personal experience rooted in truth. Jesus reconciled believers to God through His sacrifice, making it possible for them to call Him Father. This transformative relationship invites believers to walk with Christ, not as distant followers, but as those who fully belong to Him.

God makes this relationship a reality by sending Holy Spirit to dwell within believers. Through His Spirit, they come to understand God's love, experience His presence, and respond to Him in trust and worship. To illustrate the richness of this relationship, Scripture offers several metaphors:

- **Body:** Believers form the body of Christ, with each member joined to the other in unity and purpose.
- **Temple:** Holy Spirit dwells within believers individually and the church corporately as His sacred dwelling place.
- **Marriage:** The relationship between God and His church is even more intimate and everlasting than marriage. Just as God commands husbands not to abandon their wives, He will never forsake His Bride.

This relationship is underscored by God's standard for human marriage, which reflects His perfect care for His church: He joins man and woman together and declares that no one

should separate them. Since God expects so much from human marriage, He will all the more honor His commitment to His Bride, the church.

### **Jesus Is The Whole Body**

The closeness and belonging believers have with Jesus are poetically described by several theologians, reflecting the richness of this relationship:

As I thought of the Vine and the Branches, what light the blessed Spirit poured directly into my soul. I saw not only that Jesus would never leave me, but that I was a member of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. The Vine, now I see, is not merely the root, but all: root, stem, branches, leaves, flowers, fruit. Jesus is not only that: He provides the soil, sunshine, air, rain, and ten thousand times more than we have ever dreamed, wished for, or needed. Oh! the joy of seeing this truth.

SB#28, Huelgel, p. 105

Believers are members of the body of Christ, cared for with God's perfect love—a love so enduring that He will never abandon His Bride, the church. Andrew Murray captures this closeness in Jesus's parable of the vine and branches:

The vine parable teaches us the completeness of the union. So close is the union between the vine and the branch, that each is nothing without the other, that each is wholly and only for the other.

SB#4, Murray, p. 30

This relationship brings both glory to God and joy to His people. John Calvin emphasizes how Jesus delights in His connection with believers:

[Ephesians 1:]23. The fulness of him that fills all in all. This is the highest honor of the Church, that, until He is united to us, the Son of God reckons himself in some measure imperfect. What consolation is it for us to learn, that, not until we are along with him, does he possess all his parts, or wish to be regarded as complete!

SB#22, Calvin, p. 218



## What Is Salvation?

Through this relationship, believers share in the fullness of salvation, as explained by Ferguson:

[Totus Christus] goes back at least as far as Augustine. It is echoed by John Calvin when he tells us that Christ does not consider himself to be complete apart from us. It is language that stresses that all our salvation comes to us from God the Father in Jesus Christ [the Son] and through the Holy Spirit. This salvation is by grace alone, in Christ alone, through faith alone. It is Ephesians 1:3-14, Christ-centered, Trinity-honoring, eternity-rooted, redemption-providing, adoption-experiencing, holiness-producing, assurance-effecting, God-glorifying salvation.

SB#2, Ferguson, p. 228

Through our relationship with Christ, Holy Spirit elevates believers as sons and daughters of God, heirs of His kingdom, and joint heirs with Christ (Romans 8:15-16). Because of this profound bond, believers can confidently cry out, “Abba, Father!”

## FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. In your own words, what is salvation?
2. Why is salvation fully accomplished the moment a person is spiritually born, rather than something that develops over time?
3. What makes salvation (eternal life) an unchangeable reality rather than something temporary, losable, or uncertain?
4. How does understanding salvation as a free gift challenge the idea of earning one's way to heaven?
5. What does it mean to be a new creation in Christ, and how does this affect a believer's identity?
6. How does salvation permanently integrate believers with Christ, and why is this relationship unbreakable?
7. How does Jesus's victory over death guarantee eternal security for believers?
8. Why does the assurance of salvation fluctuate, even though salvation itself remains secure?

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9. What role does Holy Spirit play in sustaining salvation, and how does His presence empower believers?
10. How do repentance, obedience, and perseverance result from salvation rather than contribute to it?
11. Why can't a person escape judgment without a personal relationship with Jesus?
12. What do the biblical metaphors of body, temple, and marriage reveal about a believer's connection with Christ?
13. How does union with Christ create a community for believers?
14. How does salvation radically redefine a believer's purpose, calling her into God's kingdom work?

# PART 2

## ***Steady Growth In Christ Confirms Salvation***

While our union with Christ secures our standing before God, the steady rhythms of growth cause us to fit as living stones in His spiritual temple and give us tangible confirmation that we are truly His. By God's grace, our affections, actions, and attitudes gradually reflect Christ's likeness. This ongoing transformation doesn't earn our salvation but provides clear evidence of its reality.

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