



Topic 4: Assurance of Salvation

Being Sure That You're Right with God

“This is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. 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 5:11–13

Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ (now known as Cru), once said:

“Surveys indicate that 50 percent of the church members in the United States are not sure Christ is in their lives. These are good people. Often, they have served faithfully in the church for years. And yet, they still have no assurance of Christ’s abiding presence, no confidence that, if they died today, they would go to be with the Lord. . . .What about you? If you were to die today, are you absolutely sure, beyond a shadow of a doubt, you would go to heaven?”²

As followers of Jesus, one of our greatest needs is the confident assurance that we are right with God, that our sins are forgiven, that we are children of God.

² Bill Bright, “Transferable Concepts: How You Can Be Sure You Are a Christian,” *Cru*. <https://www.cru.org/train-and-grow/transferable-concepts/you-can-be-sure-you-are-a-christian.html>.

Perhaps you struggle with this question of your status with God, or your eternal destiny. If so, this lesson is for you. And even if you are “absolutely sure,” it’s essential to understand this issue thoroughly, so that you can help explain this truth to other confused believers.





Five Common Reasons Christians Doubt their Salvation

Reason	The Doubt	The Truth
#1: Fluctuating feelings	Many people experience a delighted sense of freedom and closeness with God when first understanding and embracing the good news of Jesus. Typically, however, this joy fades away. And for many that sense of God's nearness also fades away. Without these feelings to assure them, they question if anything happened at all.	Following Christ involves learning to live by what God says is true (faith), not by what seems to be true (our feelings). See Romans 1:17; 2 Corinthians 5:7; and Galatians 2:20 for more on living by faith.
#2: Struggles in life	Some new Christians mistakenly assume that receiving Christ will bring an end to their worldly troubles (e.g., medical, financial, occupational, etc.). When their problems don't go away, they wonder if their salvation is real.	Nowhere does the Bible guarantee an easy life for God's people. In fact, it suggests just the opposite is true. As C. S. Lewis said, "If you want a religion to make you feel really comfortable, I certainly don't recommend Christianity." ³
#3: Falling back into sin or old habits	Salvation (i.e., the new birth—John 3) means we receive new life, new standing with God, a new nature, a new identity, new desires, and new power. We are new creations (2 Corinthians 5:17)! And yet we still have an unredeemed human nature, we live in a fallen world filled with temptation, and our minds are not yet fully renewed. We remain vulnerable to sinful impulses. And when we yield to them, we doubt that we have become "new" at all.	Our failures don't suggest we're not believers; they indicate our continuing need for Jesus. Regret over sin and the desire to change show that you are God's child. We won't be perfect in this life (Philippians 1:6), but we can expect to make progress as we walk by the Spirit (Galatians 5:16).
#4: Attacks by the evil one	When we stumble and fall, we hear a voice in our head that tells us "A true child of God would never do such a thing," "See there, your heart isn't really changed!" or similarly condemning statements.	That condemning voice we hear is not God's voice—it's the voice of the enemy, Satan, the father of lies (John 8:44). Satan seizes every opportunity to attack us (Ephesians 6:16). Take up your shield of faith and ignore that voice!
#5: Losing sight of grace	Legalism is the devilish lie that we are responsible to live good lives and thereby "maintain our salvation." This system of "works righteousness" denies God's grace and asserts that we can earn salvation through our good deeds. When we know we haven't been good enough, we doubt our standing with God.	The gospel of grace says that we didn't do anything to earn or deserve salvation and we can't do anything to preserve right standing with God. (Galatians 3:2-3). Instead, we trust in a grace that is freely given (Ephesians 2:8-9).

3 C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmann Publishing Co., 1970).



Bible Study

1. What are some typical responses when people are asked if they know *for sure* that they are right with God and destined to spend eternity with him?

2. Look closely at these verses:

- ▶ “This is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son” (1 John 5:11).
- ▶ “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).
- ▶ “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9).

a. What do these verses say about salvation and eternal life?

b. These verses contrast the idea of a *gift* with that of a *wage* you earn. How would you explain the difference between these two concepts?

c. Why is it important that the Bible says salvation is a gift? What does this mean in your own life? Have you ever tried to “earn” God’s grace? Explain.



3. Now take a moment to examine these verses:

- ▶ Jesus, in speaking about himself: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6).
- ▶ Jesus, while praying: "Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (John 17:3).
- ▶ The apostle Peter, in preaching about Jesus: "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).
- ▶ The apostle John, in writing about Jesus, the Son of God: "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:12).

a. What do these verses say about the source of eternal life?

b. In light of these passages, how do you respond to commonly heard statements like: "I believe there are many ways to God" or "It doesn't really matter *what* you believe as long as you are sincere" or "It is narrow and arrogant for Christians to claim that Jesus is the only way to God!"?

c. Why do you think people have a hard time understanding and accepting that salvation cannot be earned through good works, but is found only in Jesus?



4. Carefully read these verses:

- ▶ “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).
- ▶ “Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24).

a. What does it mean to believe in Christ?

b. What does John 5:24 mean when it says that we will have “crossed over from death to life”? What kind of life transformation might we see?

c. If we put our trust in Christ, what can we be absolutely sure about? (Hint: Re-read 1 John 5:13.)

d. If you were to die, and God were to say to you, “Why should I let you into heaven?” what would be a good biblical response based on your study here?



Take-Home Reflections

Three Amazing Truths about Eternal Life

1. Eternal life is a GIFT (1 John 5:11; Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:8–9; John 3:16).
2. Eternal life is found only in a RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST (1 John 5:12; John 14:6; 17:3; Acts 4:12).
3. Eternal life is a CERTAINTY for those who trust in Christ (1 John 5:13; John 5:24).

Life Application

An important part of discipleship is learning how to apply God’s truths to your life. Below are just a few ways you can start thinking about what you’ve learned and apply it to your daily life.

1. Memorize our memory verse:

“This is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. 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 5:11–13).
2. Share with one other person (a spouse, coworker, child, neighbor, friend, etc.) the concepts in this lesson—how he or she can be absolutely sure of being in right relationship with God.
3. Consider how you would answer this objection:

“This idea of *assurance* is a dangerous teaching! If you go around telling people they can know for sure they have eternal life, what will keep them from living any old way they want!?”
4. How can we help someone who is struggling with doubts such as the ones listed on page 35? Have you ever struggled with similar doubts? Having doubts motivates us to ask questions. Where can we go to find answers or get wise advice?