

THE BELIEVER'S ETERNAL SECURITY

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By the Book™ A Chapter by Chapter Bible Study Series from Jerry Vines Ministries
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Let's Begin

A.W. Tozer once said, "We want security in this life and eternal security in the world above!... That is a kind of definition of our modern day Christian fundamentalism." He was right; too often Christians take for granted the wonderful security we have in Jesus Christ. On the other hand, some Christians struggle with security in their relationship with the Lord. Doubt appears to reign in people's hearts. Questions surface:

- Does God really love me?
- Will I be saved for sure when I die?
- How do I know the Bible is true?
- How can I be sure I am not deceived?
- Who says Christianity is right and all other religions are wrong?

The list of questions could go on. Even though the words "eternal security" are not found, chapter four explores the believer's eternal security in Jesus Christ. Once a person truly trusts Christ, old things are past and all becomes new. We become children of the living God (cp. 2 Cor. 5:17; John 1:12). And, as we shall see in making our way through chapter four, three key principles of the believer's eternal security are developed by the author. Let's follow the outline below:

- I. Our Acquittal Is Secured Through Faith (vv. 1-11)**
- II. Our Authority Is Settled Through Scripture (vv. 12-13)**
- III. Our Account Is Satisfied Through Christ (vv. 14-16)**

I. Our Acquittal Is Secured Through Faith (vv. 1-11)

One of the key words in the book of Hebrews is faith. The author not only gives an entire chapter to what some have referred to as the "Hall of Faith" (chapter 11), he also gives a definition of faith (11:1). We will explore faith more fully when we reach chapter 11.

In the meantime, our present chapter concerns the *absence* of faith. He teaches us faith's significance by showing us a negative example: the tragic *unbelief* of the Hebrew people. We learned in chapter three how Israel willfully rebelled against God even after He miraculously guided them to the Promised Land (3:7-9; 15-16). Getting to the edge of Canaan, they turned back to the Wilderness. In addition, we observed the *travesty* of "departing from the living God" (vv. 12-14). In short, their hearts "hardened" into rank "deceitfulness" (v. 13).

Why did the Hebrew people balk? ...doubt.

The question remains, why did the Hebrew people balk? Had not Moses been sent by God Almighty to deliver them from Egyptian bondage? And, had they not succeeded in being delivered from Pharaoh? Had God not also performed stunning miracles to prove His presence among them? What, then could keep them from going over the Jordan River and claiming the land flowing with milk and honey (Ex. 3:8)? Only one answer suffices: *doubt*.

The author of Hebrews writes, "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world" (Heb. 4:1-3).



The key word in this passage is “fear.” The Greek term is *phóbos*, which carries the idea of terrifying or frightening someone, and consequently causing him or her to run away. Yet the author is obviously using “fear” in a good sense. Though left to ourselves we most certainly would miss the promises of God, we who “have believed do enter into rest.” What brings blessings into the life of every believer? Faith! The people did not secure the promises of God because they lacked faith when hearing the Word of God—“but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.” Promises must be appropriated by faith. Doubt has no place in the hearts of those who live and walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7).

Reflection Connection

If God promises us victory over all our enemies, why is it we are still afraid? Why do we remain fearful?

In addition, God promises His people *victory* over unbelief. While the key word in the first paragraph was “fear,” the key word here is “rest.” In fact, he offers two dimensions in understanding precisely what he means by “rest.” *First, he refers to a past rest.* The author writes, “For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (Heb. 4:4–7).

Included in the *past rest* is *creation* (v. 4) on the one hand and *Canaan* on the other (vv. 5-7). The rest of *creation* is a rest of completeness. God finished His handiwork and simply said, “It’s done” (Gen. 2). In addition, the *creation* rest symbolizes the future rest believers would have in the Lord Jesus Christ. The *Canaan* rest is a rest of spiritual victory, pointing to the future inheritance of all God’s people. Yet, while God’s past rest of *creation* could not be hindered in the least, the *Canaan* rest not only could be hindered, it was hindered! Disobedience and unbelief kept the people of God from victory in the promised land.

Doubt has no place in the hearts of those who live and walk by faith.

Second, not only does the author refer to a past rest, but also to a promised rest (vv. 8-11; cp. Matt. 11:28-29). Clearly, the author alludes to our *salvation* in Jesus Christ. He writes, “For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God” (Heb. 4:8–9). To obtain this rest, we do nothing. Faith connects us with the living God. Christ obtained this rest for His people through His death on the cross.

In addition, the author refers also to our *sanctification* in Jesus Christ. Whereas our *salvation* pertained to our *standing* with God, our *sanctification* pertains to our *status* with God. In other words, our sanctification is based on our level of obedience to Him. Hence, we are able to grow in our relationship to God. Unlike the Hebrew people, we “enter into the rest” through our obedience to Him not our departure from Him. Our Lord promises us rest—victory over the world—through our faith and obedience to Him.



II. Our Authority is Settled Through Scripture (vv. 12-13)

The Bible is like a Divine kaleidoscope. Every turn reveals new beauty, wonder, and truth. An adequate definition is hardly available for the Word of God. Perhaps that remains the reason Scripture's description of itself likens it to inanimate objects like seed, hammers, and swords (cp. Jer. 23:29; Eph. 6:17).

Consequently, the Bible is firmly established as our *primary* authority. And, compared to other books, the Bible clearly displays its complete superiority. The author writes an apt description of God's Word, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:12-13).

According to the author, three marks characterize the Word of God in the life of the believer. *First, the Word of God is a living book.* The Greek word translated "quick" is *zâô*, and means "to live." Most instances in the New Testament refer to human life (cp. Acts 17:28; 22:22; Rom. 7:1-3). Metaphorically, the term references an object which is lively, active, and/or enduring (1 Pet. 1:3, "living, enduring hope"). The Hebrews author is particularly concerned that believers perceive the *continuity* of the Word of God. In other words, the Scripture is always alive and always up to date (cp. 1 Pet. 1:23-25). Someone once said, "We must make the Bible relevant for today." But, as Billy Graham used to be fond of saying, "The Bible is more relevant than tomorrow's newspaper!" It speaks to us today as if it were written specifically with us in mind.

The Bible is a living book.

Moreover, we not only perceive the *continuity* of the Word of God, we also explore and obey the *contents* of the Word of God. Scripture comes alive in the heart of the person who hears it and seeks to obey it. The Bible is a *living book*. Its life establishes its authority.

Yet the Bible is more than a living book; the Bible is an energizing book. The author says the Word of God is "powerful." The Greek word translated "powerful" is *energes*, and is the word from which we get the English term, "energy." It means "productive" and carries the idea of an actively working agent. The Word of God works on the inside of every human being. The Holy Spirit uses the Word as the primary means through which the new birth takes place (cp. 1 Thess. 2:13; James 1:18).

Hence, the power of the Word of God *converts the soul* (Ps. 19:7-11). No other book commands such power. Countless souls have been miraculously saved by simply reading the Bible. In addition, the Word of God *comforts the heart* (cp. Ps. 119:50; Rom. 15:4). A simple but clear Word from the Lord Jesus calms the troubled heart (John 14:1-3). Finally, the Word of God *cleanses the life* (John 15:3; 17:17). Our lives before God are as filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). Through Jesus Christ and His Word, sinful stains are bleached white as snow!



Reflection Connection

The Bible speaks as if we are born again by the Word of God. However, we know we are born again by the Spirit of God. Is there a conflict between these two ideas? Explain.

Third, the Bible is a penetrating book. The author describes the Word of God as “sharper than a two-edged sword.” While the war swords of the first century cut the outer flesh, the Sword of the Spirit cut the inner spirit. Scripture cuts deeply into the sinner’s stronghold (cp. Acts 5:33; 7:54). It pierces a person’s heart, exposing the moral nakedness a person has without Jesus Christ. It explores a person’s life—“dividing asunder”—exposing to intense examination all the motives, thoughts, and goals of one’s private world. No creature hides from the sword of God’s knife. Like a piercing dagger, the Holy Spirit cuts away all the veneer, leaving only the true and genuine behind.

Nor is the Scripture effective only on people. It just as easily cuts through the calloused, evil hide of Satan himself (cp. Eph. 6:17). The only offensive weapon we possess in spiritual battle is the Word of God. Jesus employed it against the evil one (Matt. 4:4). So must we. Scripture forever stands as the believer’s sure authority.

III. Our Account Is Satisfied through Christ (vv. 14-16)

The author continues to build the case for our eternal security in Jesus Christ. Since we are made right with God through the instrument of faith and not good works, it remains possible for all to come to Jesus. In addition, God speaks clearly and authoritatively in His Word. We are certain we are saved because the Bible is clear that all who have faith in Jesus Christ are the children of the living God.

Finally, we have eternal security in Jesus Christ because our sin account is fully satisfied through Christ’s offering as our Great High Priest. The Hebrews author says it like this: “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:14–16).

First, we know His position as Great High Priest (v. 14). According to the author, He “passed into the heavens.” In Judaism, the high priest served the earthly temple, passing beyond the veil on the worshiper’s behalf only once a year. Contrarily, Jesus functions in Heaven itself on our behalf and has done so since the day of His glorious ascent (John 20:17; Acts 1:9-11). His priestly role is His present role for us. In the past, He served as Prophet, while in the future, He will serve as King. Hence, our Lord’s position is multifaceted. He remains Victor (Ps. 24), Master (Acts 2:35-36), Forerunner (Heb. 6:19-20), and now, as “son of God,” High Priest and Intercessor (cp. Heb. 7:25).

Second, we know His perfection as Great High Priest (v. 15). Our High Priest possesses not a single flaw. His victory is aptly described as being “tempted in all points” like us, yet remaining “without sin.” Jesus bore the full brunt of temptation. He took all Satan could muster. Not a single temptation we could imagine is beyond the scope of Christ’s temptation. He was tempted “in all points” like we are, but unlike us, vulnerable to none. A complete absence of sin marked the

Reflection Connection

The security we have in Jesus Christ is, “He paid it all.” But if Jesus “paid it all” does it not mean that a person may live out his or her desires no matter what those desires are? Why or why not?



Lord's entire life. In addition, *sympathy* is indicative of His perfection. Because Christ won victory over temptation, He stands in a position to sympathize with us in our weaknesses. And, He gained the caliber of sympathy only experience can offer.

Third, we know His provision as Great High Priest (v. 16). Because of His mediatorial sacrifice, we may “come boldly” to God’s “throne of grace.” We need not fear we will be cast aside or rejected. Our Lord Himself said, “him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). He continually provides mercy for the past (cp. Titus 3:5), while amply providing grace for the present. Grace means God gives us not what we deserve but His favor at Christ’s full expense. Not only so, He offers believers unwavering hope for the future. No one can live apart from hope. And, through His full provision, hope belongs unconditionally to every child of God.

Golden Greek Nugget

The author writes of a “rest” that “remaineth” for “the people of God” (Heb. 4:9). “Rest” is a key word in this section. The Greek term in verse 9 is *sabbatismós*, and is the basis of our English word, “sabbath.” While in the Old Testament, the term was employed to denote rest from labor, the Hebrews author implied we have an eternal rest waiting upon us with the living God.

Wrap Up

In this study, our eternal security in Jesus Christ was on full display. We explored three principles in chapter four which demonstrate our secure position as a child of God. First, acquittal from sin is based upon our trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. If we miss it here, no salvation follows no matter what else we may believe rightly. We are saved by faith in Jesus Christ. Second, our authority for embracing our salvation is no less than God’s eternal Word. We stand tall on the promises of God. Finally, since Jesus’ sacrifice and priestly work as our Great High Priest is perfect, we remain fully assured of our eternal relationship with the Lord Jesus.

