

## SOTERIOLOGY (123)

**Achievement #32** - At the moment of salvation, a person is complete.

A believer cannot ever be more or less a believer. At the moment of salvation, the believer stands complete in his relationship with God (Col. 2:9-10). One may reflect that he is a believer more or less; but positionally speaking, at the moment of salvation he is complete in his relationship with God.

**Achievement #33** - At the moment of salvation, a person possesses every spiritual blessing.

The truth really sums up all the benefits of being saved by grace (Eph. 1:3). We have attempted to put a nametag on what is meant by this in the previous 32 listings. It is impossible to fully grasp all positional and possessional truths at the moment one is saved. The immense magnitude is that God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings.

Dr. John Walvoord said, "As all these blessings indicate, salvation is a work of God for man, not a work of man for God. ...The truth of the riches of divine grace is almost overwhelming, and it is difficult to give it proper recognition. Those who preach the Gospel, however, must make clear how abundant are the riches believers have in Christ when they place their faith in Him" (*Edited Theology*, Vol. 2, p. 148).

After analyzing these 33 divine achievements, the message is clear—"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast" ("Eph. 2:8-9).

**QUESTION #43** – What is the doctrine of eternal security?

The doctrine of eternal security is the belief that once a person has been the recipient of the saving grace of God, he is so kept by the grace and power of God that he cannot ever fall from his saved estate or ever lose his salvation.

To state the doctrine in simple terms, eternal security is the belief that once a person is saved, he is forever saved. Once a person has been saved by God's grace, he is always kept by God's grace.

**QUESTION #44** – What are the various titles that have been given to this doctrinal study?

There have been several titles ascribed to this doctrine:

1) This doctrine has been called "The doctrine of eternal security."

This is the most recognized and most advertised title for this doctrine.

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2) This doctrine has been called “The doctrine of the eternal security of the believer.”

This title places the emphasis on the fact that once a person is a believer he is eternally secure in his salvation.

3) This doctrine has been called “The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints.”

This title emphasizes that once a person is a believer he will persevere and is guaranteed eternal salvation.

4) This doctrine has been called “The doctrine of the perseverance of the Lord.”

This title emphasizes that once God has saved a person, He is the One who forever keeps the person. It is not the person who is necessarily faithful; it is that God is faithful to keep those He has saved.

5) This doctrine has been called “The doctrine of eternal life.”

All of these titles are legitimate expressions of what this doctrine is about; however, the last “The doctrine of eternal life” is most biblical because the words “eternal life” occurs 43 times in the New Testament.

The question that becomes critical to answer is whether or not a person has eternal life. If one has eternal life, one must be eternally secure for the concept of eternal negates any concept of temporal.

**QUESTION #45** – What is meant by the word “eternal”?

One of the key words associated with this doctrine obviously is the word “eternal,” as illustrated by “eternal security” and “eternal life.” A good place to begin is to ask the question what does the word eternal actually mean.

The word “eternal” is used 65 times in the N.T. as an adjective, which defines, qualifies or limits a noun. Adjectives are used to give a more specific understanding of something—i.e. not just a tree, but a “big” tree; not just a house, but a “new” house. If you want to specify something, you use an adjective; if you don’t want to specify something, you don’t.

As an adjective, the word “eternal” is used in at least 21 ways:

- 1) It is used to describe “eternal fire.” Matt. 18:8; 25:41; Jude 7
- 2) It is used to describe “eternal punishment.” Matt. 25:46
- 3) It is used to describe “eternal sin.” Mark 3:29

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- 4) It is used to describe “eternal dwelling.” Luke 16:9
- 5) It is used to describe the “eternal God.” Rom. 16:26
- 6) It is used to describe “eternal weight.” II Cor. 4:17
- 7) It is used to describe “eternal things.” II Cor. 4:18
- 8) It is used to describe an “eternal house.” II Cor. 5:1
- 9) It is used to describe “eternal destruction.” II Thess. 1:9
- 10) It is used to describe “eternal comfort.” II Thess. 2:16
- 11) It is used to describe “eternal dominion.” I Tim.6:16
- 12) It is used to describe “eternal glory.” II Tim. 2:10; I Pet. 5:10
- 13) It is used to describe “eternal salvation.” Heb. 5:9
- 14) It is used to describe “eternal judgment.” Heb. 6:2
- 15) It is used to describe “eternal redemption.” Heb. 9:12
- 16) It is used to describe “eternal Spirit.” Heb. 9:14
- 17) It is used to describe the “eternal inheritance.” Heb. 9:15
- 18) It is used to describe the “eternal covenant.” Heb. 13:20
- 19) It is used to describe the “eternal kingdom.” II Pet. 1:11
- 20) It is used to describe the “eternal Gospel.” Rev. 14:6
- 21) It is used to describe “eternal life.” Matt. 19:16, 29; 25:46; Mark 10:17, 30; Luke 10:25; 16:9; 18:18, 30; John 3:15, 16, 36; 4:14, 36; 5:24, 39; 6:27, 40, 47, 54, 68; 10:28; 12:25, 50; 17:2, 3; Acts 13:46, 48; Rom. 2:7; 5:21; 6:22-23; Gal 6:8; I Tim. 1:16; 6:12; Titus 1:2; 3:7; I John 1:2; 2:25; 3:15; 5:11, 13, 20; Jude 21.

Clearly the adjective “eternal” is used most often to describe “life” than to describe any other noun. The words “eternal life” actually occurs 43 times in the New Testament. Of those 43 times, 23 uses are by the Apostle John (Gospel of John—17 times; I John—6 times) and the chapter in which these words are used the most is John 6 (5 times).

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Since over 50% of the uses of the words “eternal life” occur from the pen of John, we can legitimately conclude that if we are to properly understand what is meant, we must take a serious look at the writings of John.

The crucial question which naturally arises from this adjectival use of “eternal” is “What does it mean?” Why wasn’t God content to use only nouns like fire, punishment or life and what was He trying to communicate when He decided to describe these words by prefacing them with the word “eternal”?

The word “eternal” actually means without end (Arndt & Gingrich, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 28). Joseph Thayer adds that it means something will never cease, something will always be (*Greek Lexicon*, p. 20). Moulton & Mulligan, two esteemed grammarians who trace N.T. Greek words in secular usage say, “In general, the word depicts that of which the horizon is not in view...” (*Greek Vocabulary*, p. 16). Plato, in his use of the word, says “eternal” is that which is timeless (Kittel, Vol. 2, p. 198).

We cannot be far from the proper meaning of “eternal,” according to the greatest Greek linguists and grammarians, when we understand “eternal” to mean that which is without end.

We must conclude that whenever God uses the adjective “eternal,” He does to communicate a non-temporal, non-ending time element. One text that clearly demonstrates this is II Cor. 4:18. Here, “eternal” that, which is without end, is contrasted with “temporal,” that which will end.

When “eternal” is connected to “life,” we must conclude God is speaking of a life that will never end or a life that will always be. Eternal life is a life that will never cease to be. If there is anything temporal to it, it cannot be eternal.

When we take a salvation passage which promises “eternal life,” such as John 3:15 or 16, the statement is “whoever believes in Jesus Christ will have eternal life.” Since God is specific to qualify life with the adjective “eternal,” the meaning must be “whoever believes in Jesus Christ will have a life that will never end, a life that will always be and a life that will never cease to be.” The word “eternal” negates any possibility of a temporal salvation. Once one believes on Christ, one has “eternal” life. This immediately nullifies any temporal association. If it is temporal, it is not eternal and if it is eternal it cannot be temporal. Therefore, if a person believes on Christ, there is no possibility of a temporal life based upon faithfulness or lack of faithfulness. Based on God’s Word, one who believes has “eternal” life. Faithfulness or backsliding has nothing to do with this at all, since they would bring something “temporal” to the issue. If one’s faithfulness or backsliding determines whether one is really saved, then God cannot call life “eternal life” simply by believing on Christ. The moment God adds the word “eternal,” it takes any temporal concept out of the theological picture.

Really, the matter of eternal security is resolved right here. The moment God says believing on Christ gives “eternal” life, the matter is settled. Woe to any that tamper with the revealed doctrines and Word of God.

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**QUESTION #46** – What are some clarifications that need to be made concerning eternal security?

**Clarification #1** - There is a major difference between the assurance of eternal life and the fact of eternal life.

The assurance of one's salvation has to do with personal certainty. The fact of our salvation has to do with positional reality.

Certainty of eternal life only comes by studying the Word (I John 5:13) and by obeying the Word (I John 2:3). The reality of eternal life comes by believing on Christ.

A text like Heb. 6:1-3 makes it very clear that it is possible for one to actually possess eternal life but be at such an immature level that he doesn't know it.

I read a story of a man who once made a small investment in some stock. He stuck his certificates in a drawer and forgot all about his investment. Years passed and as the man grew old, he was rummaging through some boxes he had stored and found the stock certificates. After making an inquiry with a stockbroker, it was discovered that this man was worth a small fortune. His one-time decision to buy those stocks made him very wealthy, even though for most of his life he didn't know it.

So it is with one's salvation. A one-time decision to believe on Jesus Christ gives one eternal life. One may not know it or feel it, but that does not change the reality of it. There is a major difference between the assurance of eternal life and the fact of eternal life.

**Clarification #2** - The doctrine of eternal life is not to be equated with the promotion of a sinful life.

It is a heretical tragedy when the precious doctrine of eternal security is twisted by men into meaning that once a person is saved he can go out and do whatever he wants and involve himself in any sin or evil practice. Those who equate the doctrine of eternal security with the doctrine of a sinful life are either in ignorance of the Bible or they are twisting what is in the Bible for their own purposes. In either case, the truth of Scripture is not being proclaimed.

God's Word makes it very clear that once a person possesses eternal life, he is indwelt by God's Spirit and becomes very accountable for his spiritual life and will be specifically judged to determine the gain or loss of eternal rewards based on his spiritual development. Those who equate eternal life with living a life of sin overlook at least seven key biblical facts:

**Fact #1** - Not all who say or think they have eternal life really do have it.  
Matt. 7:22-23; I John 2:19

Just because a person says or thinks he is going to heaven doesn't mean he really is.

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Jesus Christ was the greatest historical figure to ever walk this earth; therefore, most people have some acknowledgement of Christ. But that does not mean they have Him as their personal Savior.

**Fact #2** - One who persists in continual disobedience does not possess eternal life. I John 2:4

Present tense verbs here indicate that one who continually says he knows Jesus Christ, but continually lives contrary to the Word of God, “is a liar and the truth is not in him.”

It has been my observation that when one is truly saved and is not living in accordance to God’s Word, there are continual doubts about one’s relationship with God and not a continual confidence. The believer who is living life in sin will often wonder if he is really saved. There is certainly anything but a confident testimony from one living life in the flesh.

**Fact #3** - One who possesses eternal life and continues in sin will lose eternal rewards.  
I Cor. 3:15; 9:24, 26

There is much on the line for the believer who refuses to live a spiritually disciplined life. It is biblically revealed that one may possess eternal life and lose eternal rewards. This would include a loss of governmental, management level responsibilities in eternity (i.e. Luke 12:42-44).

**Fact #4** - One who possesses eternal life and continues in sin risks weakness, sickness or death. I Cor. 11:30; I John 5:16

It is a very serious matter for a true believer to persist in some sin for God can and will take a believer’s life home to be with Him (Rev. 2:21-23). We may observe that this kind of Divine action occurs after a time for repentance has been given.

**Fact #5** - One who possesses eternal life and continues in sin risks church excommunication.  
Matt. 18:15-18; Rom. 16:17-18; I Cor. 5:11-13; II Thess. 3:14-15; I Tim. 5:20;  
Titus 3:10-11; Rev. 2:20

It will be eternally damaging for one to receive a testimony from the elders before Jesus Christ that one persisted in sin and would not repent (Heb. 13:17).

**Fact #6** - One who possesses eternal life possesses it, in part, so he may produce good fruit.  
John 15:8; Eph. 2:8-10; Titus 3:8

No believer is saved “by” good works, but he is saved “for” good works. We obviously have not been saved just so we can go to heaven or God would take us there at the moment of salvation. We have been saved, in part, to make a statement for Him.