

### **Question: "Is eternal security Biblical?"**

**Answer from GotQuestions.org:** When people come to know Christ as their Savior, they are brought into a relationship with God that guarantees their eternal security. Jude 24 declares, "To Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy." God's power is able to keep the believer from falling. It is up to Him, not us, to present us before His glorious presence. Our eternal security is a result of God keeping us, not us maintaining our own salvation.

The Lord Jesus Christ proclaimed, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:28-29b). Both Jesus and the Father have us firmly grasped in their hand. Who could possibly separate us from the grip of both the Father and the Son?

Ephesians 4:30 tells us that believers are "sealed for the day of redemption." If believers did not have eternal security, the sealing could not truly be unto the day of redemption, but only to the day of sinning, apostasy, or disbelief. John 3:15-16 tells us that whoever believes in Jesus Christ will "have eternal life." If a person were to be promised eternal life, but then have it taken away, it was never "eternal" to begin with. If eternal security is not true, the promises of eternal life in the Bible would be in error.

The most powerful argument for eternal security is Romans 8:38-39, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Our eternal security is based on God's love for those whom He has redeemed. Our eternal security is purchased by Christ, promised by the Father, and sealed by the Holy Spirit.

**Recommended Resource:** Eternal Security by Charles Stanley.

### **Question: "What is conditional security?"**

**Answer from GotQuestions.org:** "Conditional security" is a theological term used in reference to the salvation of believers in Jesus Christ. It describes the enduring quality of the Christian's salvation. In other words, a Christian's salvation is "conditionally secure." This begs the question: upon what condition is the believer's salvation secure? Proponents of conditional security assert that the salvation is conditional upon remaining faithful until the very end. To use an analogy the Bible uses, the athlete must finish the race in order to receive the prize. To support this view, those who adhere to the doctrine of conditional security would point to such biblical passages as the following:

1. "And many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved." (Matthew 24:11-13)

2. “So therefore, brothers, we have an obligation—but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” (Romans 8:12-14)
3. “Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.” (1 Corinthians 15:1-2)
4. “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.” (Galatians 6:7-9)

These passages, and many others that could be cited, point to the conditional quality of the believer’s salvation. In each of these passages, the biblical author (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) uses conditional language (e.g., if you endure, then you will be saved) to highlight the nature of the believer’s security in Christ. In order to ensure the security of our salvation, the believer must: 1) Endure to the end; 2) live by the Spirit; 3) hold fast to the preached word; and 4) sow to the Spirit. It’s not as if the gift of salvation is lacking in any way, but the individual believer must earnestly strive to remain faithful. In the words of Paul, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12).

Given the weight of the biblical evidence, it would seem that the view of conditional security is unassailable. How could anyone argue with the notion that the believer must remain faithful until the end to secure his salvation? Yet, there is another side to this debate. This is the age-old theological debate between Arminians (those who hold to conditional security) and Calvinists (those who hold to what it called “eternal” security or Perseverance of the Saints). Where the Arminian can trot out dozens of biblical passages that point to the believer’s conditional security, the Calvinist can point to an equally large array of biblical passages to support the view of eternal security, such as the following:

1. “For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible.” (Matthew 24:24)
2. “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38-39)
3. “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.” (John 10:28-29)

4. “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.”  
([Ephesians 1:13-14](#))

Just as with conditional security, many more passages could be listed that detail the eternal security of the true follower of Christ. For each of the above passages, one thing stands out—the eternal security of the believer has nothing at all to do with the individual effort of the believer, but on the preserving grace of God, whereas the passages that support conditional security seem to focus on the believer's ability to remain faithful.

What are we to make of all this? Does the Bible teach both conditional and eternal security? Does God speak with a “forked tongue”? The answer to both questions is “no.” Yet, we must be able to reconcile the passages that speak of the believer remaining faithful with the passages that speak of God preserving the believer to the end. The key to this riddle is in looking at what theologians have called the [Doctrines of Grace](#) (DoG). The DoG have been alternately called the Five Points of Calvinism (a misnomer as Calvin never articulated just “five points”) or TULIP (an acronym based on the aforementioned five points). Here, in brief, are the DoGe:

1. Total Depravity: Due to original sin, man is born thoroughly corrupt and is unable to do anything pleasing to God, nor does he seek after God.
2. Unconditional Election: Because of man's depravity, God must step in to secure the salvation of the believer. God does this by electing him unconditionally (i.e., man contributes nothing) to salvation.
3. Limited Atonement: In order to receive those God has elected unto salvation, atonement must be made to satisfy God's righteous judgment on their sin. God does this through the sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ.
4. Irresistible Grace: God applies the merits of this salvation in “real time” by drawing His elect irresistibly to Him by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. This is accomplished through the means of preaching the gospel.
5. Perseverance of the Saints: The salvation God has wrought for believers is seen through to the end as God preserves and sanctifies His elect until the end.

In order to evaluate whether or not the believer's salvation is conditionally or eternally secure, one must first deal with the preceding five points of the DoG. Perseverance of the saints is not a stand-alone doctrine, but logically rests upon the other four points. The linchpin of the DoG is the first point, total depravity, which, if true, the other four points must necessarily follow. Space does not permit a thorough defense of the doctrine of total depravity, but suffice it to say that the Bible unequivocally teaches that man is, on his own, totally incapable of coming to God for his salvation ([Matthew 19:25-26](#); [John 6:44](#); [Romans 3:10-18](#); and many more).

Critics of Calvinism and the DoG will assert that if we teach and hold to these doctrines, holiness and piety will go out the window. In other words, if salvation is eternally secure, what restrains a believer from sinning at will? Claiming faith in Christ becomes the ultimate “get out of hell” card. The Apostle Paul asked the same question in Romans 6:1. Paul’s response was that sin is not compatible with the new life in Christ (Romans 6:2-4). Far from advocating a license to sin, the DoG actually do more to promote Christian piety than the doctrine of conditional security. The Puritans, known for, among other things, their piety and strict devotion to holy living, were predominantly Calvinists. In the DoG, piety is seen as the grateful response of the believer for God’s amazing grace in salvation (Romans 12:1-2). These doctrines, if held and believed rightly, make the works we do a response of true love to our gracious God who loved us enough to save us from our sin and misery. The Heidelberg Catechism (one of the earliest confessional documents of the Protestant Reformation and a teaching tool for children and new believers) is broken into three sections: The Misery of Man (our sinful state); Of Man’s Deliverance (God’s gracious act of salvation through Jesus Christ); and Of Thankfulness (our response to God’s grace, which also outlines our duty as Christians).

So if we accept the premise that the DoG are true (i.e., biblical), then how do we reconcile that with all of those passages that purportedly speak to conditional security? The short answer is that we (believers) persevere (remain faithful until the end) because God preserves us. To put it another way, if we do nothing to obtain or earn salvation (salvation being a free gift of God’s grace), then how can we lose salvation? Conditional security is acceptable only to those who also believe that they somehow contributed to their salvation in the first place (which Arminian theology logically implies). But this flies in the face of such passages as Ephesians 2:8-9: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast,” which clearly assert that we contribute absolutely nothing to our salvation; even the faith necessary to receive the gift of grace, is itself a gift of God.

On the other hand, Arminianism gives man a reason to boast in the end. If by my cooperation with the Spirit of God I remain faithful to the end, I can boast (a little) about how I was able to stay the course and finish the race. However, there will be no boasting in heaven except to boast in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:31). The doctrine of conditional security is not biblical; the Bible is quite clear that we persevere because God preserves us.

**Recommended Resource:** Eternal Security by Charles Stanley.