

ETERNAL SECURITY: ARE BELIEVERS SAVED FOR ETERNITY, Part 2

It helps to understand the concept of eternal security if the words are defined. Eternal has to mean "eternal" or it means nothing. The point to remember is that if justification salvation can be lost, then it was never eternal in the first place despite the proclamations of both the Lord and the Word of God that to believe results in eternal life. There are three Hebrew words and one Greek word translated "eternity."

Eternal, עולם, means a long duration, futurity, perpetuity, everlasting, and the distant future referring to an indeterminate and unending time going on into the future. It has the sense of an unlimited duration of time, usually with a focus on the future. This is the primary Hebrew word that refers to eternity.

Eternal, עד, means perpetuity of time, eternity or eternal, and forever and ever referring to an indeterminate and unending time going on into the future. The sense is one of an unlimited duration of time, without end, and without reference to other points or units of time.

Eternal, בְּנִיחָה, means everlastingness, perpetuity, and forever referring to an indeterminate and unending time going on into the future.

Eternal, αἰώνιος, means eternal, everlasting, agelong, forever, for all time, and without beginning or end.

The point to be made here is that both Hebrew and Greek support the concept of an eternal life which is a never-ending life that cannot be lost or forfeited in any way the end result of which is a life that is lived in the presence of God for eternity. This eternal life is predicted only on faith in Christ Jesus; it cannot be lost or forfeited for any reason, nor are there any works or behavior patterns that can disprove one's claim to be a believer.

One other concept we need to understand in order to fully grasp the concept of an eternal life that is based solely on God's promises to grant eternal life to all who believe in the Son of God is grace. Grace plays a huge role in understanding eternal life. Those who believe that eternal life may be forfeited or lost have an issue with grace.

Grace, $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma$, means favor, grace, or acceptance referring to a feeling of favorable regard. This word was used in Genesis 6:8 where it was revealed that "Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord."

Grace, $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma$, means "a favor done without expectation of return; the absolutely free expression of the loving kindness of God to men finding its only motive in the bounty and benevolence of the Giver; unearned and unmerited favor. *Charis* stands in direct antithesis to *erga*, works, the two being mutually exclusive ..." [Spiros Zodhiates, s.v. " $\chi\alpha\rho\iota\varsigma$," *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, 1469].

Grace is granted by God without any expectation of return and that includes faithfulness, sinlessness, good works, or anything else. The motives for grace originate in God alone, and everything about grace is unmerited and unearned on the part of the person granted God's grace. We do nothing to get it or to keep it. It is a serious mischaracterization of God's character to demand or require some sort of reciprocal act in return for the bestowal of God's grace, His unmerited favor.

Anyone who thinks that justification salvation may be forfeited for apostasy or for an egregious, continual sin pattern or for the failure to walk a Christian walk and live a Christian life is denying God's grace. God's character is called into question by those who believe justification salvation may either be experienced but forfeited, or who believe one can prove to be an unbeliever, although professing faith, by failing to persevere in holiness and faithfulness to the end of one's life. God's promise is that eternal life will be granted to the person who believes. If that promise is abrogated in any way, then the promise was not made in good faith, which is an impossibility. God cannot lie and it is interesting to note that Paul stated that truth in his letter to Titus in connection with eternal life.

Titus 1:1–2 ¹From Paul, a slave of God and apostle of Jesus Christ, to further the faith of God's chosen ones and the knowledge of the truth that is in keeping with godliness, ²in hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the ages began.

Let's examine the scriptural support for understanding that justification salvation is an act of God whereby a lost, spiritually dead human being is granted eternal life at a precise, exact moment in time based only on belief in the person and work of Christ Jesus. What better source to examine than the Lord Himself?

John 6:47 ⁴⁷“Truly [ἀμήν], truly [ἀμήν], I say to you, he who believes [πιστεύω] has eternal life [αἰώνιον ζωήν] (NASB).

John 6:47 ⁴⁷I tell you the solemn truth, the one who believes has eternal life (NET Bible).

This verse begins with the Lord presenting a very emphatic truth claim. The verse begins with amen, amen, often translated “verily, verily” or “truly, truly” as the NASB translation does.

“In the entire NT, only the Lord uses the word *amen* at the beginning of a sentence as a word of affirmation.... ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you,’ which could be rendered, ‘I who am the Amen [Truth itself] tell you as a most certain and infallible truth’” [Spiros Zodhiates, s.v. “ἀμήν,” *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*, 134-135].

The word means “truly, indeed, in formulas of certainty and solemnity ‘it is the truth,’ formally transliterated amen, usually in the beginning of a statement of truth, sometimes doubled for emphasis or style” [James A Swanson, s.v. “ἀμήν,” *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)*].

The next word to understand is believe, πιστεύω.

The BDAG lexicon has the following various possibilities of meaning for the word: “[1] to consider something to be true and therefore worthy of one’s trust, *believe*; [2] to entrust oneself to an entity in complete confidence, *believe (in), trust*; [3] *entrust*; [4] *be confident about*; [5] *think/consider possible* [Frederick William Danker, ed., s.v. “πιστεύω,” *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian Literature*, 816-818].

Unless theology is forced into the meaning, *pisteuo* does not mean to do anything other than believe in, have faith in, and trust in. Many pastors and theologians force other things into the meaning of believe such as be sorry for your sins and promise not to sin in the future, make Christ Lord of your life, or change your life in various ways they think people should change in order to be a “real” believer. For a believer in Christ Jesus, what is the result of believing? It is eternal life for the one who believes. Eternal life, by definition,

cannot be lost because if that were possible, it would not be life eternal; it would only be eternal life possible based on our life and work after belief which is not what the Lord said. He said the one who believes, right now, is granted eternal life at the moment of belief.

“Believes” is a present active participle which generally, but not always, indicates ongoing, continual belief, but in this context, it simply refers to a believer as a believing person. To be a believer, one has to exercise faith at a moment in time and one then becomes a believing person.

Faith is a very simple concept. We either believe something or we do not.

“It follows that a Greek reader who met the words ‘he who believes in Me has everlasting life,’ would understand the word ‘believe’ exactly as we do. The reader *most certainly* would not understand this word to imply submission, surrender, repentance, or anything else of this sort. For those readers, as for us, ‘to believe’ meant ‘to believe’” [Zane C. Hodges, *Absolutely Free! A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation*, 29].

This leads to the charge that anyone who believes without any supporting works-based evidence has only exercised intellectual assent, “head” faith, not “heart” faith, which, in the accuser’s mind, means that justification salvation has not occurred. They use pejorative expressions such as “cheap grace,” “easy believism,” and “antinomianism” to describe the Free Grace understanding of belief. Those are not accurate statements; in fact, they are mean spirited, sarcastic accusations concerning the Free Grace position. Believing the facts of the Gospel and personally applying them is what it means to be born again. I know people who have been raised in church and consequently know the Gospel and believe it is true, but they still reject it because they do not want it! Saving faith is exercised when one can say, “I know these Gospel facts, I know they are true, I know they are applicable to me, and if I want them to be effective in my life, I want to personally appropriate them and apply them to my life.” That, however, does not mean I must do anything other than placing my faith in Christ Jesus in order for my

personal salvation to be actuated. No works are required to either obtain or to keep justification salvation. Believing and personally applying the facts of the Gospel is not a work.

There are also people, probably many, if not most, who profess the name of Christ and who do good works, and who appear to be godly, religious good people, but who are nevertheless not believers and therefore unsaved. They have not been born again. Justification salvation is not about what you do; it is about what you believe.

Matthew 7:21–23 ²¹“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven *will enter*. ²²“Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ ²³“And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew YOU; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’”

The Lord said that those who do the will of the Father will enter the Messianic Kingdom. What about belief? The answer is that the will of the Father is to believe in the Son.

John 6:40 ⁴⁰“For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”

The Lord said the one who believes in Him has eternal life, justification salvation, and will be resurrected at some point in the future, glorification salvation. He did not mention sanctification as a requirement for either justification or glorification. Belief is linked to eternal life and to the resurrection. If one could lose eternal life after one believes but before one dies, then this Scripture is untrue. Believing, having eternal life, and experiencing the resurrection are all part of one continuous truth claim. There is nothing about doing good works, turning from sin, being religious, being a good person, or anything else that people can do that will result in either belief or in the resurrection.

John 6:47 is a very straightforward presentation of a truth claim, that is, to believe in Christ Jesus—in who He is and in what He did for mankind on the cross—is to receive eternal life. It is a very simple proposition.

Ephesians 2:8–9 ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; ⁹not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

It is by God's grace, which is bestowed upon a person at the moment of belief in Christ Jesus resulting in justification salvation which is the gift of God, that a person receives eternal life. We do not earn it and we cannot work for it. If we think we have to work for it, we are placing God into the position of debtor; therefore, He must owe us for our work. By way of contrast, faith is not a work but is credited, as a grace gift, to him who believes.

Romans 4:4–5 ⁴Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. ⁵But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,

Once we receive eternal life, it is a permanent possession which cannot be lost otherwise it would not be eternal.

Calvinists insist that the gift in Ephesians 2:8 is faith, not salvation. That is due to their doctrine of total depravity which claims that a spiritually dead person cannot believe anything and therefore must be given faith by God, and once they have been made spiritually alive, they can then believe. As I mentioned in the first lesson, I call this the "you must be born again to be born again" doctrine. I will quote a Calvinist here so you can see the false nature of this teaching concerning what it means to believe as it relates to Ephesians 2:8.

"Believing *is not* the cause of a sinner obtaining Divine life, rather is it the *effect* of it. The fact that a man believes, is the evidence that he *already* has Divine life within him. True, the sinner *ought* to believe. Such is his bounden duty. And in addressing sinners from the standpoint of human responsibility, it is perfectly proper to say 'Whosoever believeth in Christ shall not perish *but have* eternal life.' Nevertheless, the fact remains that *no* unregenerate sinner ever did or ever will believe. The unregenerate sinner ought to *love*, and love Him with all his heart. He is commanded to. But he *does not*, and *will not*, until Divine grace gives him a new heart. So he ought to believe, but he will not till he has been quickened into newness of life. Therefore, we say that when any man *does* believe, is found believing, it is proof positive that he is *already* in possession of eternal life" [Arthur

W. Pink, *Exposition of the Gospel of John: Three Volumes Complete and Unabridged in One*, 340-341].

Furthermore, if a person claims to have been born again, according to Calvinist theology, he must persevere in faith and holiness in order to “prove” his salvation. Any failure to do so, proves that his profession of faith was false and he was not one of the elect because he could not experience justification salvation if he was not elect; therefore, he did not have eternal life no matter the fact that he did profess faith in Christ Jesus and thought himself to be a born again believer. What would you rather believe in determining whether or not you are a believer, the Word of God or Calvinist theology?

John 3:1-21 is full of truth that indicates to believe is to be born-again and receive eternal life. First, the new birth, the spiritual birth, is contrasted with a person's physical birth.

John 3:5 ⁵Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

The Lord makes the emphatic truth claim at the beginning of the sentence, “ἀμὴν, ἀμὴν,” that what follows is absolute truth. Just as a person cannot be “unborn” after they are physically born, it follows that a person cannot be spiritually “unborn” either. If a person could be spiritually “unborn,” that would destroy the illustration the Lord is using to reveal the truth concerning the new birth in this pericope. He who is Absolute Truth is presenting absolute truth. The only way a person can enter the Kingdom of God, which is the Messianic Kingdom, is by means of faith in Christ Jesus which results in a second birth, i.e., a spiritual birth, a new birth. Once the Messianic Kingdom ends, the eternal state begins and eternal life is obviously necessary for entrance into that state as well. Some theologians do not believe this Scripture is relating a contrast between physical birth and spiritual birth, but the entire pericope is contrasting earthly matters with

heavenly matters. If this verse does not contrast the two births, physical and spiritual, then the point of the entire argument is lost. I proved this in two sermons entitled "The New Birth" which may be accessed here: [The New Birth-Part 1, John 3:1-15 – Fredericksburg Bible Church \(fbgbible.org\)](#) and [The New Birth-Part 2, John 3:16-21 – Fredericksburg Bible Church \(fbgbible.org\)](#). They are located in the Fredericksburg Bible Church Live Stream lesson archives on the "Lessons" tab under "Topical Studies" and entitled "The New Birth."

John 3:14-15 correlates the fact of eternal life by means of faith, trust, and belief as it related to the Exodus and the pericope of the bronze serpent.

John 3:14–15 ¹⁴"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; ¹⁵so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

Numbers 21:8–9 ⁸Then the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live."⁹And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on the standard; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived.

The Israelites rebelled in the wilderness and God sent fiery serpents among them as punishment for their sin. The people who were bitten by the serpents had to do nothing more than look at the bronze serpent raised on a standard in order to have their physical lives spared. That was a faith response to Yahweh's command to Moses. Christ then related that incident to His work on the cross. People must believe in Him, the Son of Man, and in His work on the cross in order to have their spiritual lives spared which results from being granted eternal life.

"God healed instantly anyone who simply looked at the snake. The instrument of judgment and death (the snake) became the means of life. So it is with the Christ lifted up on the cross, the instrument of His death. One 'look' of faith in Christ immediately heals and brings eternal life" [John F. Hart, "John" in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1615].

There is nothing in this verse that suggests man need do anything other than look to Christ in faith in order to obtain eternal life.

Immediately following this truth is perhaps the most well-known and effective verse in the Bible concerning faith and eternal life.

John 3:16 ¹⁶“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish [ἀπόλλυμι], but have eternal life.

This verse may be broken down into five sections; four of them relate to God's role in the assignment of eternal life, and one of them relates to man's role. God loved the world and gave His only begotten Son. Man must believe in Him. Once man believes, God promises that he should not perish and that he would instead have eternal life.

God's offer of eternal life is to “whoever believes” without qualification or distinction concerning who that may be. Every single human being who has ever lived is savable; no one is shut out from God's grace. Nothing is required to be saved except to believe “in Him,” Christ Jesus. “Have” is a present tense active verb meaning the believer has at the moment of belief, eternal life.

The only criteria for obtaining eternal life is belief, and believers can never perish. Perish, ἀπόλλυμι, means to destroy utterly, to kill, to slay. If a believer could lose salvation, then he would be subject to the judgment of unbelievers, but that cannot happen. A believer cannot lose justification salvation.

Believers never face judgment; unbelievers are constantly under the threat of judgment unless and until they believe.

John 3:18 ¹⁸“He who believes in Him is not judged [κρίνω]; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Judgment, κρίνω, is referring to judging as guilty, condemning referring to judging a person to be guilty and liable to punishment.

People may object and say, “What about the judgment seat of Christ? Aren't believers subject to that judgment?” Well, 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 never uses the word

“judgment” or “judgment seat of Christ.” It actually never says that Christ is the One conducting the evaluation although the implication is very strong to the point of no doubt that He will be conducting it. What believers will experience in that instance is an evaluation concerning whether or not rewards are in order rather than a judgment that subjects them to punitive measures. They may or may not receive a reward for faithful service, but they will not be punished for that failure; they simply will never attain a reward they could have earned for glorifying the Lord by means of a faithful walk.

The Lord made it doubly clear that justification salvation cannot be lost by those who are in Him. No one can be snatched out of His hand nor can they be removed from the Father's hand.

John 10:24–29 ²⁴The Jews then gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, “How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.” ²⁵Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these testify of Me. ²⁶“But you do not believe because you are not of My sheep. ²⁷“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; ²⁸and I give eternal life to them, and they will never [οὐ μὴ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα] perish; and no one will snatch [ἀρπάξω] them out of My hand. ²⁹“My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father's hand.

The reason these Jews are not among Jesus' sheep, that is, as born-again believers, is because they do not believe. This does not mean they will never believe; it simply means that at that point in time they were not believers. The people referred to as His sheep, are born-again believers. He characterizes belief as hearing and following Him, the Shepherd who knows them. This is not a verse that says following Him is a requirement for eternal life. It is a figurative way of referring to one who has believed as a sheep in relation to the shepherd. Earlier, in answer to a question on works (plural), the Lord said the only work (singular) required is to believe in the One sent by the Father.

John 6:28–29 ²⁸Therefore they said to Him, “What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?” ²⁹Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”

This does not mean that faith is a work. The Lord was simply using the context of the discussion to say that belief in Him was required for the new birth. We know that Romans 4:4-5 specifically says that faith is not a work.

The Lord said He gives eternal life to those who believe and they can never perish. Never [οὐ μὴ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα] is, in the strongest, most emphatic way, a phrase of negation. It literally reads, "Not, not to the forever," or "Not, not to the age" or "Not, not to the forever." Once a person believes, they are spiritually alive and can never lose that life; they cannot again experience spiritual death. Belief, not works, is the only criterion for obtaining eternal life.

He said that believers could not be snatched out of His hand nor could they be snatched out of the Father's hand. The implication is that something would have to be more powerful than God to cause a believer to perish in the spiritual sense. Snatch, ἀρπάζω, means to snatch, to seize, to gain control over, or to plunder by means of seizing by force. No person, no thing is powerful enough to snatch anyone out of God's hand that God does not want snatched out of His hand.

Paul reiterated this truth in Romans 8.

Romans 8:38–39 ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Those who are in Christ can never be separated from Him by anything. Death cannot do it; Satan and his followers cannot do it; nothing can do it. The common response to this is, "Well, I can remove myself from Him," but Paul, anticipating this objection through the Holy Spirit, says otherwise. Note that every created being is unable to separate those who are in Christ from Him. Since we are created beings, we are unable to

even remove ourselves from the love of God! Sure, believers can leave the church and even renounce Christ, but God's grace overcomes even unfaithfulness and apostasy. Grace is about the object of our faith, the Messiah, and not about people and what they may or may not do apart from believing in Him.

2 Timothy 2:12–13 ¹²If we endure, we will also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; ¹³If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

“The words translated if we are faithless probably should be translated ‘if we are unbelieving’ since all other NT uses of this verb refer to *unbelief*, not to *unfaithfulness*. Even if we stop believing, we remain eternally secure, for He cannot deny Himself. Jesus promised that all who believe in Him will never hunger, will never thirst, will never die, will not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16; 6:35; 11:26). He cannot deny what He Himself has promised. His promise is independent of our continued faith or of anything we may do or fail to do” [Robert N. Wilkin, “John” in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Robert N. Wilkin, 492].

Verse 12 is a verse concerning rewards, not eternal life. Those who endure will be rewarded with a position of authority in the Kingdom reigning with Him. Those who deny Him will themselves be denied the reward of reigning with Him, but they will still be saved (1 Cor. 3:10-15) because God cannot be anything other than true to His Word that all who believe are saved regardless of what they do or do not do. This too is the expression of God's grace toward those who believe in Christ Jesus.

We have examined some of the words the Lord had to say, now what did Paul have to say about justification salvation and eternal life?

Paul revealed a chain that represents the life of the believer from eternity past on into eternity future. This is an unbroken chain that depends only on Christ for its fulfillment.

Romans 8:29–30 ²⁹For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; ³⁰and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

God foreknows all who will come to faith, and everyone that is foreknown will come to faith, without exception. He predestines believers to be conformed to the image

of the Son. All those He calls will be justified and all those justified will be glorified, again, without exception. There is no room left in this chain for anyone who believes to fail to be glorified. Anyone who is justified at a moment in time is destined to be glorified at a moment in time at some point in the future whether that be by means of translation at the Rapture or by means of bodily resurrection from the state of physical death.

This Scripture also identifies the role sanctification salvation plays in our entire salvation experience because it is missing from this chain of salvation. If proper behavior is necessary to achieve glorification, how can sanctification be missing from this chain of salvation? If it is a necessary link, it should not and cannot be missing. That leads to the conclusion that sanctification is not a required link for neither justification salvation nor for glorification salvation. It is a desirable link, but not a requirement for justification salvation that leads to glorification salvation. Believers are perfectly positionally sanctified in Christ, but our experiential sanctification salvation is less than perfect, and, in fact, can be carnal, sinful, and unfaithful. Since God foreknows everything, how could He say that everyone who has justification salvation will be glorified if, in fact, they could fail to reach that final step in this salvation chain? He could not, because that would make Him out to be less than truthful which is a state that cannot possibly be.

We examined Ephesians 2:8-9 in terms of justification salvation, but Ephesians 2:10 reveals the truth of sanctification salvation.

Ephesians 2:10 ¹⁰For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

The previous verses made it very clear that people are in no way justified by works of any kind. This verse makes it very clear that our sanctification salvation, our walk, is meant to be characterized by good works. The separation between the two reveals to us that sanctification is separate from and follows justification. Good works done by a lost

person do not justify them or bring about the new birth, and the believer's failure to do good works does not prove nor does it negate the justification salvation they have already experienced. They are two separate issues.

God is the One who brings about the new birth that instantaneously fashions us into a new creation in Christ which is composed of people who have passed from spiritual death into eternal life. This is otherwise known as the church universal or the body of Christ. It is God who does the work of imparting spiritual, eternal life into the life of the new believer. Those in Christ then, that is, those operating within the sanctification salvation phase of their new life, are expected to do good works that God has prepared for those who are in Christ to do and to walk in them.

2 Corinthians 5:17 ¹⁷Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

This is not automatic; saved people still have a sin nature; therefore, a perfect walk is not possible this side of glorification salvation. Once we experience justification salvation, there are numerous pitfalls we face once we begin our walk. Believers have had sin damage their lives before they come to faith in ways that may linger on, and coming to faith does not automatically or necessarily correct our thoughts, attitudes, behaviors, and old sin patterns. Over time, as believers mature during the process of sanctification, these things should diminish, but whether they do or not, the believer remains saved by God's grace based on faith in Christ Jesus.

The Scriptures do make it clear that temporal discipline may be imposed on believers for sinful, rebellious, disobedient behavior. That is why Paul penned some sanctification salvation Scriptures that refer to saving one's life from various temporal and spiritual dangers. This has led some theologians to claim that such verses are referring to justification salvation which is incorrect.

1 Timothy 4:13–16 ¹³Until I come, give attention to the *public* reading of *Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching. ¹⁴Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery. ¹⁵Take pains with these things; be *absorbed* in them, so that your progress will be evident to all. ¹⁶Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation [σώζω] both for yourself and for those who hear you.

Timothy is preaching to his church in Ephesus composed of believers. Paul counseled Timothy to ensure the sanctification salvation of his congregation by teaching them sound doctrine. In that way, they would be protected from the spiritually and temporally dangerous doctrines of false teachers, and they would be encouraged to access the power of the Holy Spirit to avoid the sin besetting believers on all sides at all times that is so widespread in this fallen world system.

Salvation, σώζω, must be defined in context. It obviously refers to saving from sin and spiritual death, but it primarily means to rescue from peril, to protect, and to keep alive. It may refer to healing from illness.

“This verse is confusing for those who think that sozo, the verb translated save [the NASB is the only translation I consult that uses “salvation” which is usually translated from σωτηρία], always, or even typically, refers to deliverance from eternal condemnation. Timothy and the believers he taught were already born again and did not need to do anything to stay born again. The issue here is spiritual health [in terms of sanctification salvation]. The basic sense of sozo is well-being, wholeness, and health, either physical or spiritual. The church in Ephesus was confronted by men who promoted false doctrines and false practices. To remain spiritually well Timothy and his flock needed to be ‘saved’ (delivered) from these false teachings and practices” [Robert N. Wilkin, “1 Timothy” in *The Grace New Testament Commentary*, rev. ed., ed. Robert N. Wilkin, 482].

When you see the word for “saved” in the New Testament, pay very close attention to the context. Not only does it frequently not refer to spiritual salvation in any tense, it does not always refer to justification salvation when it is used in a spiritual salvation context. The failure to distinguish between the use of this word in terms of justification versus sanctification has largely led to the errors that claim a person can lose justification salvation. These two tenses of salvation must not be confused or mixed.

Another verse that relates to sanctification salvation but which causes a lot of confusion is found in Paul's letter to the Philippians.

Philippians 2:12–13 ¹²So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

Because Paul is talking to believers, he cannot be referring to justification. He is instead encouraging them to be delivered from the power of sin by means of obedience to God's will. Believers are to assess what their response should be to the great salvation they have received by grace through faith in Christ Jesus. As they work on their spiritual growth and mature as believers, they can see that it is God who is at work through them. What is the response believers are to have? Notice that Christians are to “work out” their faith, and that God “works in” the Christian to make way for His will to be done in and through the life of the faithful Christian.

“It is commonly understood that this exhortation relates to the personal salvation of the saints at Philippi. They were told to ‘work out,’ to put into practice in their daily living, what God had worked in them by His Spirit. They were not told to work *for* their salvation but to work *out* the salvation God had already given them” [Robert P. Lightner, “Philippians” in *the Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*, 655].

What does it mean to “work out your sanctification salvation with fear and trembling?” What it does not and biblically cannot mean is that people are to work out their justification salvation. That is not possible; we know that justification is not activated by works, but by faith alone in Christ alone. Motyer has what I think is quite accurate view of this command.

“[T]here is a fear of which we know all too little and which we lose at our peril—a godly fear, growing out of recognition of weakness and of the power of temptation; a filial dread of offending God. This is not the fear of a lost sinner before the Holy One, but the fear of a true child before the most loving of all fathers; not a fear of what he might do to us, but of the hurt we might do to him” [J. A. Motyer, *The Bible Speaks Today: The Message of Philippians: Jesus Our Joy*, 128]. In other words, this is sanctification salvation truth.

The fact of carnal, fleshly Christians, which many theological systems that deny eternal security cannot account for, was proved in the book of 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 3:1–4 ¹And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. ²I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able *to receive it*. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, ³for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? ⁴For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not *mere men*?

Paul was writing to brethren, to fellow believers who are in Christ, not to unbelievers, and these men were acting carnally or fleshly. The Greek word used here is σαρκικός which means of flesh, fleshly, carnal, worldly and so on. It is not a good word to use when describing the behavior of believers. It is, however, reality, which is a fact many theologians are loathe to recognize and admit. Carnality is a state that is driven by the sin nature and informed by human wisdom. In contrast, spiritual men are controlled by the Holy Spirit and informed by divine wisdom which believers have preserved for them and available to them in the Word of God. It is obviously not a good thing when believers are acting like unbelievers, or, as Paul put it, as "men of flesh."

"Paul does not call into question the reality of their salvation from sin's penalty [justification salvation]. Instead, he exhorts them to now live according to their identification with Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit [sanctification salvation], which would honor Jesus Christ with positive eternal ramifications so as not to waste their earthly lives. Thus we see that while salvation from sin's power is available daily to all believers and is God's desire for them, not all believers are willing to yield to the Lord and walk by faith in God's Word through the enablement of the Holy Spirit" [Dennis M. Rokser, *Salvation in Three Time Zones: Do You Understand the Three Tenses of Salvation?* 60].

What Scriptures are there that reveal glorification salvation?

Romans 13:11 ¹¹Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us [sanctification salvation, present tense] than when we believed [justification salvation, past tense].

This verse identifies both justification salvation, "when we believed" and glorification salvation, "for now salvation is nearer to us." For unbelievers to have the hope of the

glorification salvation that is getting closer every day, they must first have the promise of justification salvation that comes from one's initial faith response to the Gospel. There are no requirements listed for the believer to do in order to realize this future hope except to have first believed.

It is God's promise that all who believe will have eternal life. This body we now have cannot inherit eternal life; therefore, it must be changed into a holy body that is fit for life lived in the presence of God, which is a place where sin is not present. That is glorification salvation.

1 Corinthians 15:50–57 ⁵⁰Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. ⁵¹Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed [ἀλλάσσω], ⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. ⁵⁴But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY. ⁵⁵"O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" ⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; ⁵⁷but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The body that we now have, a body that is like the body Adam had, must be made fit for glorification salvation. It must be like the glorified, resurrection body of the Lord.

"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God does not mean that the resurrection body is non-corporeal, or that it has no continuity with the believer's natural, pre-resurrection body. Paul meant that mere mortals, with bodies designed only for the earthly realm and without the transformation of the resurrection, cannot inherit the imperishable kingdom" [Michael G. Vanlaningham, "1 Corinthians" in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1803].

"Brethren" refers to believers, and they must have their bodies changed into a glorified body that is befitting a body meant to be everlasting.

Changed, ἀλλάσσω, means to change, to alter, to make different, to transform, and to make other than it is. This is not an exchange; it is changing the form or nature of something. In this case, it is changing a believer's mortal human body into an eternal body.

Death resulted in sin, both physical and spiritual, but Christ Jesus has made it possible to defeat death by means of faith in Him which is justification salvation. When the Lord's victory over death and sin is fully, experientially realized, the believer will live apart from the presence of sin for eternity in a state glorification salvation—salvation complete!

Further confirmation of the believer's ultimate glorification salvation was penned by John when he revealed that we will be like Him.

1 John 3:2–3 ²Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. ³And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Right now, we have no concept of what it means to have a glorified body. Obviously, this does not mean that believers achieve some sort of divine status under glorification salvation, but it does mean believers will have a glorified body like the Lord's glorified body, and that they will be existing in a pure state that is not possible under sanctification salvation.

“At the rapture of the Church, believers will be fully and perfectly sanctified, completely free from the sin nature and the sinful deeds that flow from it. It is at this point that the transforming work of the triune God will be completed in the believer who then becomes like Him. Everyone who has this hope of seeing Jesus at His return and becoming like Him, progressively though imperfectly, purifies himself now” [Ronald Sauer, “1 John” in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1979].

There are some Scriptures that clearly reveal the truth of the three tenses of salvation all at once. There should not be any misunderstanding about these three different phases of the believer's complete salvation experience, and there is no excuse for mixing them as some theological systems do by reading works, a sanctification truth, back into the new birth, a justification truth, as a requirement for that new birth. They are separate and distinct.

Titus 2:11–13 ¹¹For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men [justification salvation, past tense], ¹²instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and

to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age [sanctification salvation, present tense], ¹³looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus [glorification salvation, future tense]

Colossians 3:1–4 ¹Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ [justification salvation, past tense], keep seeking the things above [sanctification salvation, present tense], where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth [sanctification salvation, present tense]. ³For you have died [justification salvation, past tense] and your life is hidden with Christ in God [justification salvation, past tense]. ⁴When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory [glorification salvation, future tense].

So what does all this mean for believers in this dispensation?

First of all, everyone who places their faith, trust, belief in Christ Jesus for the forgiveness of their sin and for eternal life, is, at a moment in time, granted that eternal life. That is a spiritual birth that removes one from spiritual, eternal death and moves one into spiritual, eternal life. This tense of salvation happens in the past and results in the believer's removal from the penalty of sin which is death. This is a God accomplished act that happens at a moment in time. Based on the promise of God that all who believe receive eternal life, it is something that cannot be lost or forfeited for any reason.

Second, once a believer places their faith in Christ Jesus, they enter into the sanctification phase of their total salvation experience. In this phase, the Lord's intention is that they walk in the Spirit, produce spiritual fruit, glorify His name, do good works, study the Word of God in order to learn sound doctrine, and so on. This is the present tense of salvation that we may refer as our walk, which represents our Holy Spirit led removal from the power of sin. Those believers who walk worthy will be rewarded by the Lord for their efforts. Those who do not accomplish their sanctification salvation so well will be saved, but as a result of their unfaithful walk, they will forfeit rewards they otherwise could have earned for faithfulness. Faithful or unfaithful, they still have eternal life.

Third, the believer, either by means of translation or by resurrection, will receive an everlasting, glorified body. This is called glorification salvation, and in this future tense of our salvation experience, the believer is in the presence of God and removed from the presence of sin.

Those who back load sanctification into justification, believe that what I have outlined here is a lawless, easy to believe, cheap grace Gospel presentation. It is not; it is the Word of God. We do not ever say that believers should live anything other than righteous, biblically obedient lives that glorify the Lord; we simply recognize that some people do live in unrighteous, biblically uninformed ways. We do not encourage sin; we encourage walking in the Spirit and living holy, sanctified lives. Again, we recognize that believers can commit egregious sins, and they can fall into serious patterns of sin. We do not believe it is acceptable to live nominally apparent Christian lives, or even walk away from and deny the faith, but we recognize that born-again people live that way. None of these things nullify God's grace and His promise to grant eternal life to all who believe in that one moment of time when belief in the person and the work of the God-man, Jesus, the Messiah was professed.

We also recognize that there are people who make a false profession of faith either by being deceitful for whatever reason they have to lie about their faith or lack thereof, or by ignorance of the appropriate elements of a grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone Gospel resulting in belief in a faith plus works gospel that can save no one.

As individuals, what is our responsibility? Believe the Gospel and place your faith in Christ Jesus. Then, don't just talk the talk, but walk the walk. Always be alert for opportunities to tell people about the life changing reality of being a believer in Christ Jesus.

Live your life in a way that glorifies the Lord. Live like you are grateful for the eternal life you have been granted as a result of faith in Him alone. Live in a way that is preparing you to serve Him in the Kingdom and beyond. Live in a way that other people can see that you are a disciple of Christ Jesus. Learn the Word of God so that your life is ordered according to sound doctrine and so that you can use that knowledge to inform and teach others. Produce spiritual fruit and do good works. Learn your spiritual gifts and exercise them for the building up of the body of Christ.

I want to leave you with one final Scripture here which is the purpose statement for the Gospel of John.

John 20:30–31 ³⁰Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; ³¹but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.