

Sealed for Eternity

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[0 : 00] I want to begin this morning by asking you a question.

It's a simple question, and if it isn't so simple, I'll restate it in different ways. How's that? When it comes to the topic of salvation, what is your most cherished truth?

When it comes to the topic of salvation, what is the most cherished truth? Or I'll ask in a different way. What is the most encouraging truth element of salvation?

What is the most satisfying truth? What is the most attractive truth? What is the most comforting truth? Is it the doctrine? And when I say doctrine, I'm talking about the biblical teaching of forgiveness.

That would be a teaching of salvation. Is it conversion? What it means to be born again. Is that a truth that you cherish?

[1 : 12] Perhaps it's the teaching on adoption. Regeneration. Maybe it's redemption. We learned about that a couple of weeks ago.

To know that somebody paid the cost for our sins so we could be transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. Maybe you draw great satisfaction from the doctrine of election. Or the doctrine of justification. These are all biblical teachings. And we tend to gravitate to them. There's some that just kind of makes our heart sing, our soul joyful. I'm not saying that one is any more important than the other.

They are all necessary. And they are all precious. But I would argue today that there is one teaching on salvation that stands out brighter than all others.

[2 : 19] That it's more attractive than all others. I will argue that without this teaching, all other doctrinal truths in regards to salvation dim in comparison.

That they just don't shine the way they're meant to as God has designed them. That without this doctrine, all other precious truths would not be as attractive.

What I'm talking to you about is the doctrine of eternal security. Today I want to talk to you about the doctrine of eternal security.

Some might know it as the doctrine of the preservation of the saints. Or simply the teaching that once saved, always saved.

Or to put it negatively, it means you can never lose your salvation. Reality is salvation and all the biblical teaching of salvation wouldn't be so great if we could lose them.

[3 : 40] If salvation is GUY Is not guaranteed. If salvation is not guaranteed. If salvation is not guaranteed. If salvation is not forever. How could we sing about the joy of our salvation?

How could we sing about the confidence of our salvation? How could we talk about the assurance of our salvation? How could we talk about the rest of our salvation? The comfort of our salvation? or the hope of our salvation, if indeed we could lose them. If your salvation isn't secure, we would have the doubt of our salvation, the fear of our salvation, the anxiety of our salvation, and the worry of our salvation.

I was challenged by the absolute necessity of this teaching by a former pastor of mine, and his thoughts and his influence on me, which has stirred up for me to preach this to you today, and to share with you how this fits in with this incredible hymn we've been learning about, which has been taught to us at the beginning of Ephesians, a doxology, a praise, a hymn, by Paul praising salvation.

Salvation isn't about not going to hell. Salvation is not about having a better life. The reality is when God calls us to salvation, those words are both intense and immense.

[5 : 22] The call of Jesus Christ is to deny all else and follow him. The call of Jesus isn't a part-time call.

The call of Jesus isn't something that we only do between Monday and Saturday. In fact, the call of Jesus is an all-consuming call.

It's a call of absolute self-denial. It is a call of cross-bearing.

It is a call to the absolute submission to his will. When God, Jesus Christ, was asked, how wide is the gate to salvation, what did he say?

It was narrow. He also talks about the kingdom of God, of being like a pearl of great price. That it's to be valued, that we would sell all else in order to have that kingdom.

[6 : 35] Jesus told us that this is a hard truth to accept. When disciples came to Jesus Christ, you know what he told them? Count the cost.

One author on this subject writes the following. In view of the fact that the call of salvation is so demanding, so all-consuming, that it involves total commitment of everything I have to Christ, it is an abandonment of everything of me.

If I am to yield up everything to Christ, having given up all for forgiveness, having given up all to be rescued from hell, having given up all to receive the promise of heaven, only to be told that this deal doesn't come with a guarantee.

Jesus, you're asking a lot of me. You mean to tell me, I give myself totally to you to be my Lord and Master, yet you might not keep me?

You might not hold on to me? Are you telling me that there is no assurance that I'm going to make it into heaven?

[8 : 05] That's a tough pill to swallow. Let's be honest here.

If the Lord cannot hold on to me, can't hold me, can't keep me, what hope is there? If salvation is not God's work, then I am never going to be saved.

If salvation is not His work, if God doesn't hold me, if God doesn't keep me, if God doesn't preserve me, I won't make it.

Because if God can't save me, I can't save myself. If God doesn't elect me, I can't elect myself. If God doesn't sanctify me, I can't sanctify myself.

If God doesn't glorify me, I cannot glorify myself. And if God doesn't keep me, I can't keep myself.

[9 : 13] The truth of the matter is, if I'm not good enough to save myself, I'm certainly not able and good enough to keep myself.

I will never be worthy of my salvation. Let me put it to you in another way. If you could lose your salvation, you would.

Do you get that? If you could lose your salvation, you would. If it's possible, it will happen.

It has to be. If any part of my eternal salvation is based on my power, my ability, my commitment, my works, my righteousness, guess what?

I won't get there. How do I know this? I'll give you one word, one name. Adam. Adam was a man born perfect and without sin.

[10 : 27] Adam, born, lived, had no sinful tendencies whatsoever. He lived in a perfect world, a world where there was no death, no sin, no sin at all.

Adam, no sin at all. Adam with no sinful tendencies at all. No sin inside of him. Adam who literally spoke to God. But he could not keep himself in a right relationship of obedient love to God.

If Adam can't do it, how can we? How can we, when we think of ourselves, we know ourselves. We have fallen flesh.

We live in a fallen world. We have a fallen nature. As Christians, we are prone to sin. If anyone is here, sitting here, thinking, hey, I'm not prone to sin, guess what?

Turn around and ask your spouse. Right? Talk to your kid. They'll enlighten you to who you really are. Right? We are prone to sin.

[11 : 40] Fact is, the longer we live, the more sin we do. Right? We're just adding to the ledger. Sin gets added day after day after day.

Reality is, we are prone to sin and doubt. To think that we could go before God and no one could bring an accusation, just think what Satan could do. Hey, let me show you the list of all the reasons BK couldn't be in heaven.

Now, heck with Satan, think about the Holy Spirit. who knows all my heart's inclinations, my desires, which are unholy.

Satan, you think you got a list. Let me get out this even longer and longer ledger to show you why BK does not deserve heaven.

We would see no shortage of law violations. So the idea that it's even remotely possible to keep our salvation on our own.

[12:52] And you know what it is? It's crazy. It's crazy to think that we could keep our salvation. So let me say it again.

If you could lose your salvation, you would. I'm going to be honest with you. I don't know if you guys have thought very deeply about this.

Perhaps you've just accepted it. Hey, my church says I'm once saved, always saved. It really has no implication. In fact, that's for guys like David and BK to haggle out in the upper offices, right? You know, let the theologians debate this. This stuff's not for us. I was confronted with this aspect of losing your salvation when I was in grade 10.

I actually still remember the house I was in when someone brought it up. We had this citywide youth group and different people from different churches and someone obviously had a different teaching on this.

[14:00] And they made this assumption, well, so-and-so is no longer a Christian anymore. And I remember just thinking, you know, like, I'm just like 16, 15, 16, thinking, what do you mean they're not a Christian anymore?

I'd grown up in a church that always taught once saved, always saved. So I, being the smart guy that I was at 15, right, I came back with, well, John 10, right?

John 10, 27 says, 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.

Boom! Discussion ended, right? So they counter with, well, what happens if that person willingly walks away from that hand? All right, I'm going to have to go study this a little bit more, right?

So much for that big discussion that happened on that one night. So I'd have to do a little bit of work on this. Words such as the unforgivable sin were presented and then they hit me with this big boomer.

[15:05] Hebrews 6, 4-6. Let me read it to you. For it is impossible in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift and have been shared in the Holy Spirit and have tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the age to come and then haven't fallen away to restore them again to repentance since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.

I didn't have an answer for them. Never been exposed to that. I felt my church leaders kind of gave me a semi-clear response to this.

I didn't know how to answer. And then they told me about people that I knew that lost their salvation. all of a sudden all these fears came over me. These fears and I struggled through this issue.

You could say it was my first spiritual crisis. And what I kept wondering in my mind was where is the line?

Where is the line? There's got to be some line that there's some sin. It doesn't have to be an exact sin that I would lose my salvation.

[16:30] It couldn't be just one because I knew plenty of Christians who did some pretty big sins and were still Christians, right? So there had to be like a weight of sins that would cause someone to lose the faith.

I knew plenty of people who apparently lost their salvation but I knew they didn't have any moment that I could recall where they officially blasphemed God and I didn't know anyone that didn't renounce God.

They just stopped believing. So if I'm to lose my salvation how did they do it and am I in danger of doing it too?

I kind of figured it had to be an amount of sin and I was always quite cognizant that I had disappointed God many times in my young life.

I knew I wasn't perfect. I knew I was prone to sins of pride, jealousy, lust, self-righteous thoughts, anger, fear overcame my young life.

[17:55] What is the sin? What is the sin? What is the sin? sin? Then I set off on this first big biblical Bible study and I came across a passage that we have before us today in Ephesians 1.

This gave me an understanding, this teaching that we've been going through of our salvation and how God is infinitely a part of all of this.

please turn with me to Ephesians 1. We're going to begin in verse 11. Now notice we learned a little bit about that last week so we're going to talk about this but the verse says in him that is in Jesus we have an inheritance and the we he's speaking to are Jewish believers there. All right? They're Jewish believers. We've obtained an inheritance and I talked a little bit about last week over the debate by scholars on are we obtaining our inheritance or is God obtaining us as an inheritance?

I actually believe it can go both ways as we're going to see in other verses but I believe specifically that he's talking about the Jewish people will be realized as God's heritage.

[19 : 15] Okay? So in him we have obtained this inheritance having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.

So that we, that is the Jewish Christians who were the first to hope in Christ, that first God presented himself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as he revealed himself to his people, they might be to the praise of his glory.

Now he switches in verse 13. Notice it says, am you also, now he's talking to Gentile believers, those who've heard the good news, that who grew outside of the Jewish faith are now hearing this. This is why it's so awesome. It says, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation and believed in him were sealed with the promise of the Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory.

Now remember last week we talked about the role of the Holy Spirit. We talked about four ways that the Holy Spirit is involved within the whole process of salvation. We see God electing us before time began, then we see Jesus Christ redeeming us from our sin, right?

[20 : 40] By his death on the cross, he's buying us back. He's pulling us in. We're his again. And then once we believe we're a seal, but we talked about one, the Holy Spirit's role is, and I called it the effectual call.

He's the one who gives us eyes to see our sin, God's holiness, and our need for a Savior. That's the work of the Holy Spirit, right? So then we also talked about, and I believe it's his primary work, is to the glorification of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit is to put a spotlight on the work of Jesus Christ, that we are to lift up the work of Jesus Christ. This is the person that holds all things together with his hand.

So the Holy Spirit, as powerful as he is as part of the Trinity, Jesus is the hero of the story. And he works to support this.

We also read just in these verses that we just covered, that his work is to build up the church. One, through the giving of spiritual gifts. I know we didn't talk about that much, but he gives us gifts to serve together.

[21 : 45] We're going to get into this later on in Ephesians. But also, he's bringing both Jew and Gentile together in the church, right? So he's bringing a people.

He's bringing slave free, man, woman. Everybody is coming together. He's breaking down the divides so that we are all one in Jesus Christ. And the fourth aspect, the fourth work of the Spirit is he testifies to truth of the Word of God.

Opens our eyes to the truth as we read. Opens our hearts and minds to understand. So here we see the fifth truth. That he is the guarantee of our inheritance.

He seals us. Let's take a look at the order here in verse 13. It says, he's talking to the Gentile believers now. You heard the gospel, right?

The Word of Truth. The gospel of your salvation. The good news. The truth about God the Father, Jesus Christ. You heard it. What happened? You believed.

[22 : 52] You believed in Jesus. Now notice, it just simply said, sealed by the Holy Spirit. Now some people want to say like there's this delay that goes on there.

But the grammatical understanding of this is it actually happens at the same time. You believe you're sealed. Bang, right there. You're his.

Now that word seal, and a lot of us understand that word. Remember in those ancient documents? You know, I don't know if you guys remember, there was a time where we used to write letters. Remember that?

You'd write letters. You'd take a pen and a piece of paper and you'd write a letter and then you'd fold it up. And what they do is they drip wax and if you were somewhat of importance, you'd have a sign, a seal on your ring.

And you would put that seal on that wax so people knew that was official correspondence or you'd put it at the bottom. Right? It's kind of your signature. But I believe it's actually more than this it's talking about.

[23 : 52] He's talking about a branding. that the moment we believe we are branded by God. Like a rich cattleman brands his cows.

He seals us as his. Do you get that? We are branded. That means he owns us. We are his for how long?

Forever. Forever. So that's what happens. At the moment you believe, you are then branded by God. We are marked as God. Now think of the context.

These are Gentiles. A lot of times back in the day, a lot of people loved the Jewish faith. They believed in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and they would become proselytes. And they were kind of like half believers.

Right? They didn't have all the rights but they could have some of them so they were called proselytes. They'd be a part of them but really not the same. So now you're a Gentile.

[24 : 58] You're finding out you get that same seal of ownership that the Israelis had, the Jewish people had. So to a Gentile, this is great news, which it is great news to us.

Amen? That you believe now you are sealed. You are his. Those promises are all yours now. And Paul was telling me when I first read this and understood this, that God marked me, B.K.

Smith, 16 years old, that I was his and his forever. Then I learned about 2 Corinthians 1, 22.

Now what's kind of interesting here is as God is sealing with the promise of the Holy Spirit, it says who is the guarantee of our inheritance?

When a man loves a woman and he wants to guarantee that she's going to be the only one, what does he do? He marries her, but what does he do before that?

[26 : 17] He's letting every other guy on the market to let him know that his sweet love is no longer available. What does he do? Engagement ring, right? You ever see those guys who say, hey, I'm going to marry her, but they don't give the engagement ring?

Like, how seriously do you take them? Right? They kind of go halfway. I half believe it, so I brought her a promise ring, right? Now, if you did that and you went through with it all, good on you.

But I've had many, many of my friends who say, yeah, I gave her that promise ring. Yeah, that didn't work out so well. Right? Because there was an absolute commitment when you get that engagement ring.

I'm sealing this. I'm putting everything on that you are going to be mine, and I'm going to marry you. I'm going to cherish you. I'm going to love you. That's what God's given this promise to his people.

Then I looked in 2 Corinthians 1.22, it says, and it is God who established us with you in Christ and has anointed us and who has put his seal on us and given us his spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

[27 : 36] So that spirit is now our guarantee from God. You're mine. That's what that sealing is. You are now indwelt by my spirit.

2 Corinthians 5.5, he who has prepared us for this very thing is God who has given us the spirit as a guarantee. It's the ring.

It's the engagement ring. You're mine until the fulfillment of time comes and you are with me eternally.

1 Peter 2.9.10 says, but you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. But I need us to understand that there's actually more important point for us being sealed than making us feel good.

[28 : 54] right? Taking the whole analogy of a diamond ring. You ask, take two couples, one couple in love, another couple in love.

The one who's got the ring you take more seriously, right? They've gone that extra two-month salary, right? They've gone that extra mile to prove their love.

And that's how we socially see it. I'm not saying it's right, but that's just how we socially see it. God seals us for more than just that. One of God's greatest promises is to redeem man.

Do you know that? Jesus Christ came to call all those who are elect, all those who are God's children. Jesus is on a rescue mission.

God is coming to get his own. As we are God's possessions, he will claim us. Now, one of the ways that he claims us is by using people like you and me to call others to faith in Jesus Christ, right?

[30 : 05] He uses us to call those to become believers. God uses us to present the gospel to others so that they may believe and be sealed as well.

That, in case if you're wondering what the big existential question is, why am I here? That's it. To call people to Jesus.

Jesus. That's our role in the kingdom. Now, let's be honest. It's kind of interesting if you guys sit back here the next five, ten seconds and think about how did you become Christian?

Now, for those of you who weren't born into a Christian home, not many of you just walked into a church cold turkey, right? Somewhere, somehow, somewhere invited you, called you, told you.

In my story, my dad was divorcing my mom. My dad was a police officer whose partner in the force was a believer and simply invited us to church and we heard the good news of Jesus Christ.

[31 : 19] Someone intervened. Someone saw the mess that was going on in the Smith family and basically said, you know what? They need Jesus. Let's invite him to church, right? Even the story of Tyra.

We heard about Tyra's testimony in the spring. Her friend who introduces to his church didn't even go to this church. She actually lived down in California, I think it is.

They were friends through Disney or Disney worship or something. I don't know. But through that, her friend, loving Tyra, did some Googling, connected with Dave, and said, hey, I want you to meet my friend Tyra.

That's how she got here. That's how she's come to know Jesus Christ. You all have stories like that. That means there was some sort of relationship created between you and the person who gave you the good news.

Someone, somewhere, connected us to a point in the gospel story. The reality is our call is to rescue people.

[32 : 32] And to do that, we do that by sharing Jesus Christ and directing others to Jesus Christ. Our role is to rescue people out of the prisons of sin, prisons of false teaching, prisons of ugly, devastating lifestyles, false religions.

And the truth of the matter, it is dangerous work. It is dirty work. Let's be honest.

We love, love to evangelize to the moralistic neighbor we have next door, right? We do. They're perfect, except they just don't know Jesus.

I just can't invite them in, man. I wish my family was more like them. It's those other people that are so devastated by their own sin in life, you don't want to touch them with a 10-foot pole.

Now, if you, if there was a chance that you could lose your salvation, think about how that would affect your evangelism.

[33 : 55] You don't want to go near the world, right? You're not just doing the homeschooling thing. You're like getting a group of people. We're going to buy an island, and we're just going to live like Christians all over there, right?

And I say that, not to be funny, is my friend was actually invited to become a pastor of one of those communities. And it was being set up by this multimillionaire, come be your pastor.

I'm drawing Christian families. We're going to set up a school and kind of have this Christian thing going on. My friend, of course, turned it down. He said, well, how else would people hear the good news of Jesus Christ?

Fact is, we can be fearful of the world. Fact is, we can get singe-snatching people out of the fire. False teaching is a powerful influence.

The world contains many dangerous allures. I don't know if you remember the pictures at 9-11 when the buildings came down, and they showed the many pictures of the rescuers that went in, the first responders, the police, the fire department, the EMRs, everyone rushed in.

[35 : 21] The pictures that you see is they're just covered in dirt and blood and sweat. On that day, 10,000 people went into the towers to remove and rescue everybody.

They were able to rescue several thousand people from around the building when it came down. There was only 20 people actually rescued from the tower itself that survived.

Talk about a great miracle that there was more than one. But they estimate by the number of this year, over 2,000 of those 10,000 rescuers will be dead by the end of the year because they were exposed to toxins and chemicals and all sorts of dangers going in to help them.

In fact, 341 firefighters lost their lives just being involved in that rescue mission. Over 20 police officers. It is dangerous work rescuing somebody.

If apostasy and false teaching is so deadly, how can we ever reach our friends and loved ones who are caught in such traps if we actually believe we can lose our salvation?

[36 : 44] Some of their lives are so potentially polluting and harmful. We don't want to go near them.

How can one expect to save someone from unbelief if there is a risk that God won't keep them and hold them? If our faith is not that strong, why would I bother sharing at all?

If I get near them, even for evangelism's sake, will I be okay? Will I remain in God's love?

And we think that way. I remember I spent four years in university residence, 30,000 kids, and every year, 15 over 4,000 first-year kids.

All sorts of debauchery is going on. They're out of their homes for the first time. They're making dreadful mistakes. I spent eight years in intense government work dealing with war crimes in the seedy people of life.

[37 : 53] And I think many of us have been exposed to many horrible things. What's interesting is that a lot of people who knew me at that time would remark that I had a strong faith.

The reality of it, I always felt my faith was very weak because I knew those temptations and I struggled by staying away from them.

The strength was who my faith was placed in. Amen? It wasn't me trying to hold on to God. It was God holding on to me. Amen? Amen? That's how it works.

It's interesting. Anytime I thought I had faith strong enough, I fell. Every time. Those moments where I totally leaned on God, God brought growth.

But it wasn't until years later that I understood why. So I want to share with you this amazing truth that I believe kept me safe.

[39 : 00] Turn to Revelation, last book of your Bible, Revelation 1, and go back a page. There's a small letter named Jude.

And I want to encourage you for those that are working with in a secular work environment or have a lot of family and friends and sometimes it's tough.

When this passage was first taught to me, I wept and wept because I understood how God is so good to me.

This is a small letter. It's a letter addressed to a group of Christian people who are beset by false teachers.

False teachers are trying to come in to their church, their community. And it's here where I learned the power of the sealing of the Spirit.

[40 : 01] It's here I learned why I wasn't engulfed by fires and flames of the Word. Take a look at verse 20. But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

Get that verse 21? Keep yourselves in the love of God. Stay close to Him. All right? Waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

Verse 22. And have mercy on those who doubt. Save others by snatching them out of the fire. To others show mercy with fear hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

Now this is where it gets good. We're told to hold on to God. We're told to rescue those from the flames to snatch them out but still hate that sin.

Verse 24. Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of His glory with great joy.

[41 : 38] to the only God our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory majesty dominion and authority. Notice what He says.

It is He who keeps you from stumbling. It's not you. It's Him. And He's the one who presents you to the Father.

Amen. That is assuming balm on our soul. It is God Jesus Christ who takes us and cleans us off. Wipes all that stuff. Cleans our hair for us. So that we would be made presentable before God the Father.

That's His stress not ours. Our command stay close to Him save those who are lost reach into those under false teachings that the world is going to answer their biggest life questions.

[42 : 50] No. We're to engage false teaching false things of this world. And don't worry. God's got you. He's holding you.

He's preparing you and He will keep you. See the great truth that I understood it was God who kept me from stumbling.

It was God who kept me safe. My friends we are sealed. We are owned. And this is a promise of God.

We are His heritage heritage and He is our inheritance. Amen? Let me pray for us. we restrictive we're our we who saw and He in the love.