

The path of true security lies between two falsehoods—one is the lie of false hopefulness that says we are secure when we are not secure, and the other is the lie of false hopelessness that says we are not secure when we are secure. It is my conviction that in our zeal to oppose false hopefulness that springs from “once saved, always saved” and other heresies that turn grace into licentiousness, that we either fail to teach the truth about security or we overreact and oppose false hopefulness with teachings that take away all hope causing some to live in terror of an inescapable hell, to give up, or to accept the lies of false hopefulness we so rightly oppose. I pray this lesson helps us understand the path of true security, to get on it if we are not, and to have the hope God intends us to have if we are. In one lesson I will not be able to cover every issue that relates to this important subject. If you have questions about anything I say, please ask me. If you think I am wrong about anything I say, please tell me. I sincerely believe that what I am about to say is true, but I fully appreciate that I may need you to teach me the way of the Lord more perfectly.

1. What is hope?

A. According to the dictionary, hope is “a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen.” Thus, Hope = Expectation + Desire.

B. Illustrations: When I was growing up, I did not hope for spankings. Expectation but no desire. I do not hope for my hair to be dark and thick like it was when I was young. Desire but no expectation. I do hope to spend Christmas with my entire family this year. Desire and expectation.

2. For what should faithful Christians hope? To be with God in heaven. 1 John 3:2-3.

3. How strong should the hope of faithful Christians be? The hope of faithful Christians should be so fully assured (Heb 6:11), i.e. abounding (Rom 15:13) and continual (Ps 71:14A), that they always eagerly await its realization (Rom 8:25).

4. If we are a faithful Christians, how does our hope compare?

A. If we are faithful Christians and someone asked us if we would go to heaven if we died right now, what would we say? Would we immediately and confidently answer "Absolutely!" or would we hesitantly reply, "Well, I am sure trying to get there," or “I think I’ve got a chance of making it”?

B, God wants faithful Christians to know they are going to heaven. 1 John 5:13.

C. Brethren, we can never be good enough to deserve heaven, but by the grace of God we can do enough to get to heaven. As one has said, faithful Christians must quit living like people who are trying to get to heaven and start living like people who have been promised heaven. Or, as another has put it, faithful Christians are not citizens of this world trying to make their way to heaven; rather, they are citizens of heaven trying to make their way through this world. They should live as people on a journey home where they know the lights are on, the door is open, and their Father is eagerly awaiting their arrival.

To have this kind of hope we must understand the true basis of a faithful Christian's hope, i.e. what a saved person must do to remain saved. Some preliminary considerations.

1. Can the true basis of a faithful Christian's hope be anything that does not produce the hope described above? No.

2. Do faithful Christians remain saved because they do not sin? No. Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:23. If we are saved (1 John 2:1A) we are trying not to sin, i.e. whole-heartedly repenting (1 John 2:1B), but if "we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8).

3. Why do faithful Christians sin?

A. Not because they have to sin. 1 Corinthians 10:13. The dental suture illustration.

B. Not defiantly. Otherwise, they would not be saved. Hebrews 10:26-27

C. Not for a lack of effort. Otherwise, they would not be saved. 2 Chronicles 6:36-39; Revelation 2:4-5.

D. Because they are still ignorant and weak. Hebrews 5:1-2A; Ezekiel 45:18-20; Numbers 15:28, 30. When people sin the first time after they are saved does that mean they are no longer repentant, that they are no longer resolved to wholeheartedly turn away from sin to righteousness? It is possible, but highly unlikely. Rather, it almost certainly means they are trying very hard not to sin, but that they still have a lot to learn and do before they completely lay aside the old self, are thoroughly renewed in the spirit of their mind, and utterly put on the new self (Ephesians 4:22-24). And what is true of new converts is true of all saved people. Every saved person who is trying very hard not to sin, but they still have a lot to learn and do. 1 Corinthians 8:2; 2 Peter 3:18; Philippians 3:12; 2 Peter 1:5-8.

4. Why do all faithful Christians still have a lot to learn and do? There is a whole lot to learn and do!

A. The more I learn the word of God, the more I come to understand that the realm of evil works I must not do and the realm of good works I must do are far greater than I previously imagined.

B. Put another way, the more I study, the more I realize that the gap between what I do and what I must do to be holy just as God is holy is wider than I previously thought.

C. The bar of righteousness is extremely high. Mk 12:30-31; Gal 5:19-23; 1 Cor 13:4-8; 16:14; 1 Th 5:18; etc.

D. The demands of righteousness pervade every aspect of our lives—our words and deeds (Colossians 3:17) as well as our thoughts and intentions (Hebrews 4:12).

E. Practically applied, the standard for what we should do is what Jesus would do if He were in our place (1 Peter 1:14-16). At the end of any given day, how many of us can look back on it and honestly say that we did exactly what Jesus would have done?

G. But, the height of the bar of righteousness should not discourage us. As we will see, our standing with God does not depend on us consistently clearing the bar, but on us constantly jumping higher and higher, to singing in truth, “I’m pressing on the upward way, new heights I’m gaining every day.” We desperately need new heights. If we climb Mt. Everest, where do we go from there? If we could achieve moral perfection in this life, we would be miserable for at least two reasons. First, because satisfaction in this life is found in climbing, not summiting. Second, because the life that is to come would hold no more promise than the life that now is. As Browning put it, “a man’s reach should exceed his grasp, or what’s heaven for?”

5. Can saved people remain saved? 2 Peter 1:10; 1 John 1:7; 1 Kings 15:5; Psalm 25:7A.

So, what must saved people do to remain saved? They must:

1. Remain wholeheartedly repentant. Romans 6:1-2, 11; Psalm 19:13-14.

A. If we are wholeheartedly repentant of sins of ignorance, we are gaining knowledge. The children of Israel were not “destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6) because they did not know everything, but because they quit learning.

B. If we are wholeheartedly repentant of sins of weakness, we are gaining strength. The church at Ephesus was not going to have its lampstand removed because its members were imperfect, but because they quit perfecting (Rev 2:4-5).

C. If we are not wholeheartedly repentant, sins of ignorance and weakness are defiant sins that separate us from God!

D. But how do we know if we are gaining enough knowledge and strength to please God? This is a wholly inappropriate and unanswerable question, one the devil wants faithful Christians to ask and obsess on because He knows it will rob them of their hope.

E. What we must do to continue to please God is to continue to be wholeheartedly repentant. We know if we are all in and if we are then whatever amount of knowledge and strength we are gaining is enough to please God! Our task is to fully commit and remain that way, to plant and to water repentance, but it is God’s task to give the increase and He will give more than we can imagine if we will mind our own business and quit whittling on God’s end of the stick!

2. Confess their sins of ignorance and weakness. 1 John 1:9.

A. Why? We do not repent of nor ask forgiveness for sins we do not admit we commit. Luke 18:9-14.

B. But how can we confess sins of ignorance when we do not know we are committing them? While we do not know what sins we commit in ignorance, otherwise they would not be sins of ignorance, we can and must admit that we commit them (Psalm 19:12). If we confess our sins of ignorance and repent of them we will constantly pursue their discovery and elimination.

3. Ask God daily to forgive their sins of ignorance and weakness as they forgive others. Matt 6:11-12, 14-15; Lk 11:3-4A. Why?

A. To maintain their relationship with God. Sins of ignorance and weakness do not terminate a faithful Christians relationship with God, but they do damage it. Otherwise, they would not be sins. While God like any good parent does not expect His faithful children to never sin out of ignorance or weakness, He does expect them to whole-heartedly try, to confess that in spite of their best efforts they still fall short, to take responsibility for their failings, and to ask Him and anyone else they have hurt to forgive them their sins.

B. To remind them that they must forgive other people if they want to be forgiven by God.

As long as faithful Christians are doing these things they maintain their relationship with God. This is the true basis of a faithful Christian's hope. It fits all we have learned about how faithful Christians remain saved. It keeps faithful Christians on the path of true security between the lie of false hopefulness on one side and the lie of false hopelessness on the other side.

But is daily prayer enough? What happens if faithful Christians sin and die before their next daily prayer?

1. This scenario assumes that the people in question died with unforgiven sins and therefore must be lost.

A. While I agree that on the day of judgment God will not overlook a single unforgiven sin, I do not believe that the people in question died with unforgiven sins because God's forgiveness of saved people's sins is governed by how they walk over the course of a day and not by a single moment in it.

B. The Colossians were faithful brethren (Colossians 1:2), chosen of God, holy and beloved (Colossians 3:12). Yet, they were still works in progress. They had to keep seeking things above (Colossians 3:1) because they still had things to learn (Colossians 1:9-11), to set aside (Colossians 3:8-9), and to put on (Colossians 3:10, 12-14).

2. No other explanation conservative brethren offer yields the hope God expects saved people to have.

A. The "In-N-Out" explanation. The "In-N-Out" explanation says we are in and out of Christ every time we sin regardless of any other consideration and therefore must die between the time we ask forgiveness and the next time we sin to go to heaven. This reduces salvation to a matter of time and chance and eliminates the hope God intends faithful Christians to possess. Since none of us have perfect knowledge, it is always possible for us to be sinning out of ignorance. If we are sinning out of ignorance we are guilty before God the moment after we ask forgiveness because we are still sinning out of ignorance. To have security, therefore, we would have to pray 24/7/365. Even if we are not sinning out of ignorance we would still have to pray 24/7/365 because we do not know that we are not sinning out of ignorance. Having to pray 24/7/365 precludes study, damns anyone who dies in their sleep, and is just not the way the scriptures picture a faithful Christian's life. I am not saying we necessarily sin 24/7/365, that we cannot go any period of time without sinning. I am saying that sin is such a part of our daily lives that the scriptures take it as a given and so should we, that our focus should be on getting it out of our lives and not on trying to identify moments in a day when we might actually be living above sin.

B. The "Neo In-N-Out" explanation. To overcome this objection to the "In-N-Out" explanation, some water down the definition of sin to a point where they believe they can go "weeks without sinning." While we never have to sin, the demands of righteousness are so high that we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us if we say we have no sin—everyone falls short of the glory of God! The model prayer is a daily necessity because we need our daily forgiveness as much as we need our daily bread (Matthew 6:11-12).

C. The "It Won't Happen" explanation. Some assert that God never allows faithful Christians to die before they have an opportunity to ask forgiveness. While God does give people some amount of time to repent (2 Peter 3:9, 15; Revelation 2:21), as far as I know there is no book, chapter, and verse which says He gives repentant people time to pray. God may do that, but righteousness does not demand it and a mere possibility does not give the expectation required for it to be the true basis for a faithful Christian's hope.

3. There is absolutely no practical difference between the explanation I offer and these other explanations.

A. As far as I know, no one who holds these other views teaches people to pray 24/7/365 or to go "weeks without praying" if they think they have gone "weeks without sinning."

B. No, like me they teach faithful Christians to remain wholeheartedly repentant, to confess their sins of ignorance and weakness, and to daily ask God and men to forgive their sins of ignorance and weakness as they forgive others.

C. There are no practical differences because this is all saved people can do to remain saved.

4. The explanation I offer and these other explanations differ only in effect.

A. The explanation I offer says doing all we can do is enough. God does not expect the impossible.

B. The other explanations say doing all we can do may still not be enough and therefore cannot be God's view on the matter. God fully expects faithful Christians to fully expect to go to heaven.

APPLICATIONS: In this lesson we have learned everything faithful Christians can and must do to be secure and therefore to not only desire to go to heaven but to fully and constantly expect to go to heaven. If we are doing these things, it is enough. If we are doing these things, when asked if we are going to heaven let us immediately and with all confidence say, "Absolutely!" If we are doing these things, let us forsake false hopelessness and be secure in Christ. Otherwise we are not questioning our faithfulness, but the faithfulness of God!