

I. Memorial Day

- A. This is the weekend that we join our nation in remembering our fallen heroes. The freedoms we enjoy comes at a high price. We honor those who put their lives on the line for our freedoms. Those men and women who gave their lives for us are a picture to us of Christ.
- B. We do not forget them. We never take them for granted.
- C. We pray God's best for their families and loved ones everywhere. We pray that we may be a nation worthy of their sacrifice and worthy of endeavor.
- D. We thank God for them. We are eternally grateful for their sacrifice.
- E. Let's express our appreciation both to active military and to their families, and pray God's safety on each one.

II. Introduction

- A. I want to do a teaching today of something that I mention all the time, but actually haven't taught on for a while.
- B. I believe that when a person really understands this truth, they finally are in a position to understand what grace really is.
- C. So the truth I want to teach on today is called Eternal Security. It's also called Once Saved Always Saved. It turns out to be controversial, but I think that's because way too many people don't let the Bible speak for itself.
- D. We have a series of teachings that we want to take everyone through. It's called the Grace Pathway. And after you're saved, this is the first teaching we emphasize... the little booklet called Secure Forever.
- E. I'm not going to repeat what's in that book; I'm going to come at it from a different angle.
- F. We are going to assemble this teaching from multiple places in the Bible. And here's our first place.

III. You've been sealed

- A. *"In Him [Jesus] you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."* (Ephesians 1:13)
 - 1. I love this verse. There's so much in it, and it's all grace.
 - 2. The second thing that happens in this verse is that you **trusted** in Jesus. That's salvation. Have you trusted in Jesus as your Savior and only hope?
 - a) Maybe you did that a few weeks ago at Easter. Maybe you did that a few years ago. If you trusted in Jesus, then something happened to you. So trusting in Jesus is the second thing.
 - b) What's the first thing?
 - 3. The first thing is that you heard something. You **heard** the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.
 - a) This is the first thing. First you hear, then you trust.
 - b) That's why the people of Pathway open our mouths and actually say the gospel. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ — who died on the cross to pay for your sins — and you will be saved.
 - 4. Step one, you heard the Gospel. Step two, you trusted in Jesus, you believed in him.
 - 5. And then step three: you were **sealed**. There's eternal security right there.
 - 6. To be sealed means that God puts a mark of ownership on you. He stamps you with a seal of approval. As God sees you, and as the angels see you, in the invisible realm, you have a holy radiance, a supernatural glow, and a robe of righteousness. You bear the imprint of your heavenly father.
 - 7. And the next verse says that this seal is the guarantee that you will go to heaven and receive your eternal inheritance.
- B. *"In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory."* (Ephesians 1:13-14)
 - 1. If God put his seal of ownership on you, and if God put his seal of approval on you, how long will that last? Until when... what does this Scripture say? You're sealed until...
 - a) Until your 490th really bad sin (70x7)? Until you fall away? Until you renounce your faith? Until you backslide? Until you do a really heinous sin? No. What does it say: until the redemption of the purchased possession.
 - 2. You are the purchased possession... you, in your body soul and spirit.
 - 3. And your ultimate redemption — body, soul, and spirit — happens on the day you cross through the pearly gates and set foot in heaven.
 - 4. That's how long God's seal on you lasts, that's how long you belong to God, that's when you step into your inheritance in glory.
 - 5. That is the guarantee of God.
 - 6. You are sealed with the Holy Spirit.
 - 7. God himself is in you. God indwells you. The Spirit of God wraps you up and encapsulates you.
 - 8. No evil force, no dark power, and nothing you do or don't do, can ever break the seal of Calvary Love on your life.

IV. Definition

- A. **Eternal security means that God himself bears all the burden to keep you saved forever, and to bring you safely to your heavenly home.**
 - 1. That's his job. That's his burden. That's his guarantee.
 - 2. Once you trust in Jesus as your Savior, something really big happens.
 - a) **In the moment you believe in Jesus, your eternal destiny is eternally taken out of your hands, and it is placed into the hands of the Father forever.**
 - 3. You simply have no say in the matter anymore.
 - a) **Eternal security means you are stuck with God and God is stuck with you forever, and happily so.**

4. When the prodigal son left his father and when into the far country, he was living a horrible life. But he never stopped being his father's son. And you never stop being your Heavenly father's daughter or son... because your eternity is out of your hands.
5. When King David had his terrible moral downfall, and he sinned in the worst conceivable ways, God still loved him, and centuries years after he died, God still called him "A man after my own heart" and he said he would bless his people for David's sake (Isaiah 37:35).
 - a) When Jonah ran from God... When Samson surrendered to passion... When Moses indulged his unholy anger... When Gomer sold her self to other lovers... When Peter denied Christ... When Abraham scoffed and Thomas doubted... And when you did that thing, and when you failed that test, and when you forgot God... And when anyone did anything bad, anything disobedient, anything unworthy of the Lord Jesus Christ... In all those moments multiplied thousands of times over...
 - (1) God's love for you didn't even flicker, because his love is rooted in Calvary, and the blood Jesus shed there covered all your sins and more.
6. *"Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost [all completely, permanently to the end] those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."* (Hebrews 7:25)
7. Do you see this? Your salvation is grounded in God's work, God's ability, God's power. He is able. He is able. Even when we are not, he is able.
 - a) If it's his ability that matters, what does that say about your ability? It doesn't matter. It doesn't make a difference. It doesn't factor in at all. You couldn't lose your salvation if you tried. I hope you're getting shocked a little and even a little angry. That's what makes this fun.
8. I know there is opposition to this teaching. A lot like the opposition Jesus faced from legalists.
9. A lot like the opposition Paul faced. And the prophets endured.
10. Grace is counterintuitive. True grace is shocking. It sounds too good to be true. But this radical, scandalous grace is only too good to be true if the Cross of Christ is false.
11. But if you believe the Cross of Christ, then grace is real, love is true, hope makes sense, and there's nothing you can do to disqualify yourself from heaven.
- B. But I do want to deal with these objections. And I want to gather them all up in one theological package. That package is part of a very pretty flower, called a tulip. Let's go deep.
- V. Calvinism and Predestination.
 - A. There is a very popular teaching among Christians. It's actually a large package of teachings, a kind of interpretive framework over the whole Bible.
 - B. That teaching is called Calvinism. It is also called Reformed theology. Sometimes, it's just called Predestination.
 - C. It is especially popular among a generation of younger Christians coming up in the church.
 - D. What I love about Calvinism is that it takes a really serious, really humble, and really rigorous approach to Scripture.
 - E. What I don't love about Calvinism is that it can get really unbalanced.
 - F. There are five main teachings, and today, we only care about the last one. They are the five points of Calvinism. And they lay out into a nice acronym with the word TULIP.
 1. **Total Depravity. Unconditional Election. Limited Atonement. Irresistible Grace. Perseverance of the Saints.**
 - G. I love Calvinists. I am not a Calvinist. I think every one of these points is overstated, and is out of balance. There is real and profound truth here. But there is imbalance too.
 - H. The fifth point of Calvinism is called the Perseverance of the Saints.
 - I. Even if people have never heard this term, I get more questions about this than about anything else. Please don't amen this, because I'm going to show you why I disagree with it. Lovingly. Respectfully. Biblically.
 1. **Perseverance means that God will cause every person who is truly saved to live in a saved and holy lifestyle until their dying day.**
Without such a holy lifestyle, no one can be certain of salvation.
 - J. Perseverance is different from eternal security.
 1. Eternal security says God will keep you saved no matter what.
 2. Perseverance says God will keep you living in a holy lifestyle till you die, and if you don't it means you were never saved to begin with.
 - a) That is not good news. That is not the gospel. That does not give enough credit to the work of Christ on the Cross.
 - K. A famous Calvinist who is an otherwise excellent and very respected Bible teacher says named John Murray wrote this:
 1. **Let us appreciate the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and recognize that we may entertain the faith of our security in Christ only as we persevere in faith and holiness unto the end.**
 - L. Well that's a scary thought.
 - M. Another Calvinist named John Piper said basically the same thing:
 1. **We do not breathe easy after a person has prayed to receive Christ, as though we can be assured from our perspective that they are now beyond the reach of the evil one. There is a fight of faith to be fought. We must endure to the end in faith if we are to be saved.**
 - N. They are saying that unless you demonstrate your salvation by a new lifestyle, you're not really saved. But that's not all.
 - O. They are saying that unless you consistently live this new, holy, Jesus-centered lifestyle *until the day you die*, you can never be certain of salvation. You can never have confidence. You can never be assured.
 - P. Okay, so when do we actually get to breath easy?

1. When do we actually get to have confidence? Never. Not until you die, and still are faithful to God.
 - Q. The most basic and fundamental problem with this teaching is it is not my faithfulness that matters. It's God's faithfulness.
 - R. If God is going to base my salvation on ME, then I know myself well enough to say that I will be damned.
 - S. Unless I have a Savior who does it all, I have no hope.
 - T. In fairness to Calvinism, they say, Yeah, but you can only persevere by the grace of God and by the power of God. To which I say, "That's funny. It's the exact same thing Roman Catholicism teaches, and you're both teaching salvation by works.
 1. The gospel tell me to look away from myself entirely, and to look to Christ alone.
 - a) It's grace, or it's works. It's grace or it's law. It's grace or it's effort.
 - (1) No middle ground. We are invited to anchor our hope in the finished work of Christ on the Cross, NEVER in the ongoing work of the Spirit in us. Look to Christ. Look to Christ. Look to Christ some more.
 - U. And so they give us all these verses that they say make salvation conditional, and make confidence impossible.
- VI. One Key Scripture
- A. I'll just take one, and I'll make it a hard one.
 1. *"For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end."* (Hebrews 3:14)
 - B. See! See, says the Calvinist! Take that!
 - C. Okay, let's take it. And let's zero in on that word "end." The Greek word is *telos*. It means the finish line. It means to cross the finish line.
 - D. In this book of Hebrews, there are three finish lines, three *telos*'s.
 1. The process that brings you to Heaven. The process that brings you to Spiritual Maturity. The process that brings you to Salvation. So which *telos* is meant here?
 - E. It's the process of salvation. When you got saved, God started working you. God answered many prayers, and you started feeling drawn to God. You started putting yourself in a place to hear the good news. You opened a Bible for the first time in a long time.
 - F. God is leading you to *telos*, to a goal, to a spiritual finish line.
 - G. And anywhere along that process, you could bail out. You could say, Not gonna happen. Not gonna get saved. Not gonna become a Christian.
 - H. You've got to get all the way to the moment of salvation, or do not cross that particular finish line. You are not a true partaker of Christ. You are not saved. You have short-circuited the process of salvation. And whatever confidence in the Calvary's love God was birthing in your heart, you threw it away. You didn't stay steadfast to the end, which means you didn't get saved.
 - I. This not a verse about staying faithful till you get to heaven.
 - J. It's a verse about stay open till you get to salvation. There are about a dozen verses that keep coming up against eternal security. And I promise you there is an answer for every single one.
 - K. Listen. I want Christians to persevere. I want you to follow God. I want you to walk in his path. I want you to be whole, and radiant, and pure.
 - L. But I am convinced that this is impossible if you're always doubting their salvation.
- VII. Scared Straight is Not God's Plan
- A. God's approach to making you holy isn't called Scared Straight.
 1. It's called grace. It's called good news. It's called a free gift. It's called "No condemnation." It's called neither do I condemn you. It's called the love of God being shed abroad in your heart. It's called being sealed by the Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of all the promises of God till that glorious day of your eternal redemption.
 - B. How does the Bible get Christians to actually live Christianly?
 1. *"We love Him because He first loved us."* (1 John 4:19)
 - a) If I can convince you of the second part of that verse, the first part of that verse will be no problem. The end. The *telos*.
 - C. I remember when I was in high school, I gave a talk to our boys club at my little church. I taught them they could never lose their salvation. An older gentleman in my church took me aside. His name was Ben. He said, "Bill, don't teach the kids they can't lose their salvation. It'll make them misbehave."
 - D. I was so confused by that. It really made me insecure. But not any more.
 - E. God's method isn't Scared Straight. So what is it then? How does God get us to live in freedom over the power of sin? People say, Oh, Bill. You're preaching all that grace, you're going to make people sin.
 - F. How do you get Christians to not sin? Is it by threatening to withhold salvation?
 - G. How about this:
 1. *"For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace."* (Romans 6:14)
 - H. The problem with Perseverance is that it preaches law.
 - I. But the great blessing of Eternal Security is that it invites you into grace—into the radical, scandalous, blood-bought, unmerited favor of God.
 - J. And if we want to see Christians living in freedom from sin, what do we need? Grace. Grace. And more grace. And on top of that throw pure, Jesus centered, Calvary based great good news.
 - K. The church's problem isn't too much grace; it's too little. Because when our grace reservoirs are full, that's when sin shall not have dominion over you.
- VIII. Jesus says...
- A. *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand."* (John 10:27-29)
 1. You are held in his hand, and he is held in the hands of a loving heavenly Father.

2. You are secure forever. Can you tell yourself that? I am secure forever.
3. Paul says...
- B. *"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Romans 8:38-39)
 1. How secure is Jesus? How safe is he up there in heaven? This is saying that His security is your security, because the Father's love for him is the Father's love for you, because you are in him, and nothing can ever separate you from that.
 2. Jude says...
- C. "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy," (Jude 1:24)
 1. Who is able? God is able. And look at those two words... you... faultless... Do those two words go together? In the realm of law, never. In the realm of grace, forever. Again and again and again and again your salvation rests on the ability of God, not of you.
- D. People who imagine they can lose their salvation picture salvation like a gift. I mean like a Christmas gift... a box, in wrapping paper, with a bow. God gives you that box, that gift. And then God can take it away, or you can give it back. See, you lost your salvation.
 1. That's not how to imagine salvation. It's not a thing in a box.
 2. It's a transformation of your spiritual DNA in every cell of your being. It's a new creation. It's a new nature. It's a new identity. It's not a thing you have, it's a being you become. It's a legal certification in the courts of heaven, signed in the indelible blood of Christ. It's the final payment of eternal debt, it's the washing away of sins, it's the metamorphosis into a butterfly of grace. It's the permanent linking of your destiny with Christ's destiny (that's real predestination) so that you and Jesus become one.
 3. For you to lose your salvation is not like giving back a box.
 4. For you to lose your salvation, God would have to put your sins back on you. For you to lose your salvation, God would have to kick Jesus out of heaven.
 5. It's not a thing in a box to give and take away.
 6. Salvation is a revolutionary, beautiful, infinitely complex metamorphosis of your very being and nature, and no one can undo it, and God never will.
- E. We could go on, but let's just say this:
 1. **The grace that saves you is a divine transformation so profound, so powerful, and so all-encompassing that there is no going back.**

IX. Grace

- A. We live in revolutionary times. Morality is changing before our eyes. The way of sending and receiving transformation is utterly transformed. The ideas of family and marriage and even identity itself are all up in the air. Artificial intelligence is a freight train heading our way.
- B. With all this upheaval, we need something solid. Something real. Something good. Something that makes everything else make sense.
- C. That something would be that matchless, peerless, mighty force called GRACE.
- D. God is doing something special here at Pathway. It's not because we're better than anyone else. It's only because we're intentionally, continually tuned in to God's radical, scandalous, truly amazing Grace.
- E. It's the Bible's best kept open secret.
 1. It's what got Jesus in trouble with religious people. It's what got the prophets of old laughed at, ignored, and thrown to lions.
 2. It's been attacked by critics, ignored by theologians, and banned by clergy.
 3. Churches water it down. Preachers mix it with law. Pastors temper it with works. Church-people hem it in with "yes-buts" and disclaimers. They pay lip-service to Grace, but they mean a lukewarm substitute for the real thing.
- F. Real Grace is a blood-bought edifice of love and truth...
 1. so beautiful it takes your breath away, so complex you can't comprehend, so counter-intuitive you can scarcely believe, so simple a child can get it.
- G. Such Grace is almost impossible to find, like diamonds hidden in the earth.
 1. It's almost impossible to believe, because it feels too good to be true.
 2. But once you see it, you can't unsee it. It heals the broken places in your heart. It rewires the damaged circuits of your soul. It opens the door to heaven. It truly, really, actually sets the captives free.
- H. It's the Good News you've been looking for.
- I. Grace is the outflow of the Cross of Christ. The free gift of Calvary love.
 1. Without the death of Jesus on the Cross, there is no grace. But by that death, that big concrete dam of law is broken, and free-grace has flooded your life and your world.
- J. Grace is the centerpiece of this pulpit. It's the mission of this church. It's what Pathway wants to be known for.
- K. Come to Pathway Church.
- L. Get Grace.
 1. Hear grace. Learn grace. Rest in grace. Be secure in grace. Then hear grace some more.
- M. Because when you get Grace, you get everything else God offers too.