Sermon Series: What Does It Mean to Be Saved?
Sermon Title: Once Saved, Always Saved

Text: **John 6:35-40 -- Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. 36 But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. 37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. 38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day. 40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."**

Introduction: **Lt. George Dixon** was a genteel, well-respected man in the Confederate Army. In the early days of the war, his fiancé gave him a $20 gold piece. During **the Battle of Shiloh,** a Union minie-ball struck him—actually, it struck the gold coin, which saved his life. The coin, soundly dented, was to remain with him wherever he went. ***It became his good luck piece, and he would often be seen kneading it in his hand***. And where did Lt. Dixon take the coin? Onto the **CSS Hunley**, the Confederate submarine, he staunchly believed could break the Union blockade and turn the tide of the war. Unfortunately for him, after sinking the **USS Housatonic**, the Hunley herself sank in 1864, taking Lt. Dixon and his crew to their deaths. ***One hundred and thirty-six years later, on August 8, 2000, Lt. Dixon's coin was found when the submarine was raised.*** I guess it wasn't so lucky after all.

People often seek out and trust in many things, whether it be good luck charms, bodyguards, security systems, or ferocious pets, that we hope will bring a sense of security to us by protecting what we highly value. We not only do this when it comes to that which we prize most in this life (**our families, possessions etc**), but also when it comes to the spiritual realm. We long for some assurance that we have a place in the kingdom of God when we die. ***While many look to false religions and human works to secure this, Christians wisely look to Christ as the One who can deliver us from the wages of sin… death***. **But are we right to believe with certainty that we possess eternal life, or should we always expect to live with some measure of uncertainty when it comes to our eternal destination**? Or to put it another way: ***Once we become Christians, is there any way to know that we will continue to be Christians throughout our lives***? This morning, in an attempt to answer this question, I would like to spend the next thirty minutes or so looking at what the Bible teaches about the topic of **ETERNAL SECURITY**. By way of definition, **eternal security means that those who are truly born again will be kept by God's power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives**. Now let's attempt to get a handle on this by asking, "***What does the Bible teach about eternal security***?"

What does the Bible teach about eternal security? Before we get into it, I should note that this is one issue upon which evangelical Christians have long had a significant disagreement. Those from a reformed background believe that one cannot lose his or her salvation, while those who are from an Arminian tradition believe it is quite possible. As we begin, I don't think it will take you very long to figure out where I land on the topic. Here's the way I see it.

- **The Bible teaches that all those who are truly born again will persevere to the end/have eternal *life*** (**John 6:38-40 -- For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day**). **Note that here in this text, Jesus says that everyone who believes** (i.e., **places their trust**) **in Him will have eternal life with the result that God will raise them up on the last day**. **In fact, our Lord tells us that this is the will of our Heavenly Father (the One who sent Him), that Jesus should lose nothing of all that He has given to Him**. Consider also **John 10:27-29**. Jesus tells us that He gives eternal life to His sheep and they shall never perish (**i.e., be destroyed—this is the work of the thief in John 10:10, not the Good Shepherd**). There are obviously many other passages that say that those who

believe have eternal life (**See John 3:16, 3:36; 5:24 etc**). So, the question becomes … **in what way can it be eternal** (i.e., *everlasting, perpetual*) **life if it does not last forever**? Elsewhere, the Apostle Paul says ***that believers have been sealed with God's mark of ownership by the promised Holy Spirit as a* guarantee of our inheritance** in **Ephesians 1:13-14**. The word for '**guarantee**' means a down payment, which obligates the contracting party to make further payments. In this case, it is God who is guaranteeing our inheritance, and He never fails to keep His word (**Numbers 23:19 - God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?**).

- **The Bible teaches that only those who persevere to the end are truly born again**. **Continuing in the Christian life is one of the pieces of evidence that a person is truly born again**. Where does the Bible say this? In **John 8:31** our Lord said to the Jews who believed in Him, "**If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples**…" In **Matthew 10:22**, He says, "**He who endures to the end will be saved**." Paul says in **Colossians 1:22-23** that we will be presented holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation, IF we continue in our faith. **Hebrews 3:14** puts it like this: **For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold firmly until the end the confidence we had at first**. **The purpose of these verses is not to make those of us presently trusting in Christ worry that some time in the future we might fall away, but to encourage us to continue in our faith because that's what people who are born again do**. In other words, what the Bible teaches is that TRUE SAVING FAITH IS ENDURING FAITH. **Listen: Anyone can claim to be a follower of Christ, but the proof is in the pudding**. Did you ever hear someone say that? It's an idiom that means a claim must be tested to prove its validity**. In other words, anyone can say he is a marathoner (he has run a 26.3-mile race), but if, upon further investigation, it is proven that he has never run one, even if he's run 20 miles, then *it is safe to say that he is not a marathon runner***! In the same way, a person may claim faith in Christ, but if he or she is quick to exit the race whenever hardship comes along, then we have sufficient reason to doubt his claim.

Why are we given warning passages? Certainly, they are provided to encourage believers to persevere, but they're also given **as a warning** to those who, THOUGH THEY PROFESS FAITH IN CHRIST, are not truly born again.

- **It is possible for unbelievers to participate in the confessing church without being born again.** The Bible addresses this reality in **Matthew 7:21-23** where we're told, **"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness**.'" **Judas is one such example**. He acted so much like a follower of Christ that when Jesus said, "**One of you will betray me**," the others did not all turn to him at the same time and say, "***He's got to be talking about you, Judas***." Instead, they asked, "**Is it I**?" Yet Jesus knew that he did not possess genuine faith and even called him a devil (**John 6:70 -- Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the Twelve? And yet one of you is a devil." He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the Twelve, was going to betray him**). In another passage, the Apostle Paul warned of certain men who were ***masquerading as Christians*** and had secretly infiltrated the churches of Galatia (**Galatians 2:4 -- Yet because of false brothers (pseudaelphous – pseudo means a sham) secretly brought in—who slipped in to spy out our freedom that we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might bring us into slavery…**). **This doesn't mean, of course, that every unbeliever in the church is attempting to disguise himself as a minister of righteousness. Many are earnestly trying to understand what Christians believe**. But it does tell us that not every person who goes to church has had a born-again experience. In the parable of the sower, Jesus spoke of some who "**when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away** (**Mark 4:16-17**)." **Having no root means that there is no real**

source of life for these individuals. They are nothing but dead people masquerading as the living. (***Review: It is possible for unbelievers to participate in the confessing church without being born again***.)

- **It is possible for unbelievers to share in a spiritual experience without being born again**. Our Lord tells us that the best way to identify those who are truly abiding in Christ is not by some sort of experience, but by the fruit they bear, according to **John 15:1-2 -- I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Here, unbelievers are identified as those who bear no fruit because they are not abiding in Christ. In John 15:6, we're told that they can expect to be "thrown into the fire, and burned".** This is similar to the warning found in **Hebrews 6:4-6 -- For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they then fall away, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. Whatever else these words of warning mean, they cannot be referring to believers because verse 8 tells us that the fruit of their lives has been purely thorns and thistles. It's not as if they once produced good fruit and now are not. And our Lord reminds us what happens to those who bear bad fruit in Matthew 7:18-20 -- A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.**

The Save Darfur Coalition was an advocacy group that attempted to raise public awareness and mobilize a massive response to the atrocities in Sudan's western region of Darfur." In Washington, D.C., a coalition of more than 190 religious, political, and human rights organizations came together. It campaigned for reform for the atrocities of the War in Darfur, which had resulted in a humanitarian crisis. Three hundred thousand civilians died while another two and a half million were displaced between the years of 2003 and 2008. Out of concern for the welfare of these people, a **Save Darfur Facebook** page was created. More than 1.17 million people indicated they were concerned and wanted to offer support to help with the humanitarian crisis. However, according to a study by Dr**. Kurt Gray of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hll**, less than .2 percent of those who liked the page and voiced concern for the people suffering in Darfur ever donated to the cause. Dr. Gray commented on the research: "***They raised almost nothing compared with what a similar campaign would have raised offline. The reason – for most it was more about looking like they were concerned than actually contributing to the need. IN THE END, THEY DIDN'T PULL THE WOOL OVER TOO MANY PEOPLE'S EYES.*** **Unbelievers will make themselves just as obvious when they masquerade as believers but do not bear good fruit.**

How can we know that we have eternal life?

- **ETERNAL SECURITY IS FOR THOSE WHO *place their trust in Christ for salvation*** (**1 John 5:11-13 -- And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life**). The question God would have us ask ourselves today is, "***At this very moment, do I trust in Christ to forgive my sins and take me without blame into heaven forever***?" You may have walked the aisle during an altar call or prayed a prayer with a pastor, or even been baptized, but the only way to know that you have eternal life is to trust in Jesus for your salvation.
- **ETERNAL SECURITY IS FOR THOSE WHO *can point to the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives***.
  - The Holy Spirit is bearing witness with your spirit that you are a child of God (**Romans 8:15-16 -- For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God**). This is usually accompanied by some sense that you are being led by the

Holy Spirit to walk in obedience to God (**Romans 8:14 -- For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God**).

- The Holy Spirit is producing spiritual fruit in your lives (**Galatians 5:22-23 -- But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control**).
- The Holy Spirit is using you to minister to others inside and outside the church (**1 Corinthians 12:7 -- To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good; Mark 4:8 -- And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold**).

- **ETERNAL SECURITY IS FOR THOSE WHO *continue to see a pattern of Christian growth throughout their lives***. The Apostle Peter tells us that there are some character qualities that, if increasing in our lives, make certain His calling and choosing of us. -- **2 Peter 1:3-8 -- His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love**.

Let's review what we've learned this morning:

- ***What does the Bible teach about eternal security?*** It teaches that all those who are truly born again will persevere to the end and that only those who persevere to the end are truly born again.
- ***Why are we given warning passages?*** Because it is possible for unbelievers to participate in the confessing church without being born again. At the same time, it is possible for unbelievers to share in a spiritual experience without being born again.
- **How can we know we have eternal life? (1)** Eternal security is for those who place their trust in Christ for salvation. **(2)** Eternal security is for those who can point to evidence that the Holy Spirit is at work in their lives. **(3)** Eternal security is for those who continue to see a pattern of Christian growth throughout their lives.

Conclusion: So, it is possible to be secure in our relationship with God. In fact, God wants us to be confident when it comes to our eternal destinies so He says in **Philippians 1:6** through the Apostle Paul: ***I'm confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus***. We are able to endure and inherit eternal life for the simple reason that God enables us to do so. In one of the Superman movies, Superman saves a fellow from a burning building. He rescues him from the top floor, and as he carries him to safety by flying through the skies, the man looks at Superman, then looks at the ground far below and says, "***I'm scared Superman. Look how far down that is***." Superman gives him a great answer, which instantly takes away his fear. "***If I delivered you from the burning fire, what makes you think I'm going to drop you when I'm carrying you to safety***?" When it comes to your eternal security, remember this: **If God delivered us from a burning Hell through the sacrifice of His Son, why would we think that He would drop us before He brings us safely home? He most certainly will not**!