

# *It Is Written*

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## CONFIDENT OF SALVATION

By Andy Sochor

The Scriptures teach that the Lord will return to judge the world (Matthew 25:31-32; Acts 17:31; 2 Corinthians 5:10). We will be judged based upon His word (John 12:48) and He will determine our eternal fate. We will either be welcomed into “*eternal life*” or sentenced to “*eternal punishment*” (Matthew 25:46).

Knowing this, is it possible for us to have confidence in our eternal salvation? Must we live our lives without knowing whether our final home will be in heaven or in hell? Notice what the apostle John wrote:

*“Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him”* (1 John 2:28-29).

John described a *confidence* that we can have as we anticipate the Lord’s return. He did not describe the Christian as one who is wishing for salvation but not knowing whether he will be saved. Yet how are we able to have such confidence, especially when we can recognize how much we have yet to grow in our walk with the Lord? Let us consider a few points that will help us answer this question.

### **Difference Between Confidence and Overconfidence**

There is nothing wrong with *confidence*, provided it has the right foundation. The wise man said, “*In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence*” (Proverbs 14:26). However, he also said, “*Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling*” (Proverbs 16:18).

We are not to think that we *cannot* fall. After citing the example of the Israelites who rebelled against God, Paul warned, “*Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall*” (1 Corinthians 10:12). Even Paul said he had to “*discipline [his] body and make it [his] slave, so that...[he] will not be disqualified*” (1 Corinthians 9:27). A child of God *can* fall away, so we should not be *overconfident* in this regard.

We are also not to ignore our past failings as if they never happened. We will discuss this point in a moment, but we should remember what John wrote: “*If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us*” (1 John 1:10). Therefore, we should not be *overconfident* and think that we have done nothing worthy of condemnation. As Paul explained to the saints in Rome, we have all sinned and are worthy of death (Romans 3:23; 6:23).

Despite the points above about not being *overconfident*, the apostle John still explained how we can “*have confidence*” as we anticipate the return of Christ. If we know that we *can* fall and that we *have* fallen in the past, how can we have the confidence about which John wrote?

### **Confidence in God’s Promise**

First of all, this confidence has God as the foundation. John explained that we can have confidence because we “*know that He is righteous*” (1 John 2:29). The Hebrew writer explained that we have “*hope*” that is “*an anchor of the soul*” because “*it is impossible for God to lie*” (Hebrews

6:18-19). The examples recorded in the Bible of God fulfilling His promises to His people have been preserved for us “*so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope*” (Romans 15:4). Paul was confident that the Lord would “*bring [him] safely to His heavenly kingdom*” (2 Timothy 4:18). We can have this same assurance.

### **Confidence as We Practice Righteousness**

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explained, “*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*” (Matthew 7:21). Therefore, God bringing us “*safely to His heavenly kingdom*” (2 Timothy 4:18) is conditioned upon us obeying Him. We must do His will to be welcomed into heaven. This was the reason why John spoke of having confidence, because “*everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him*” (1 John 2:29). Later in this epistle, the apostle wrote, “*By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome*” (1 John 5:2-3). We can have the confidence of *knowing* we are God’s children and, therefore, are heirs of the promise (Galatians 3:26-29) as we practice righteousness.

### **Confidence While Recognizing Our Unworthiness**

There may be times when, as Christians, we do not feel confident of our future reward. Yet as John explained in our text, if we trust in God’s promises and practice righteousness, we *can* have confidence. If our lack of confidence stems from a lack of faith in God or a failure to live righteously, then we need to rebuild our trust in God and repent of our sins.

However, if we trust in God’s promises and are striving to do what is pleasing to Him, this perceived lack of confidence may actually be something different – a recognition of our own unworthiness. This is not a bad thing. As we noticed earlier, if we ignore our past sins and/or think we cannot fall, we can develop an *overconfidence*. We do not want this to happen because it will lead to our downfall (Proverbs 16:18; 1 Corinthians 10:12).

Yet it is important for us to recognize that we do not *deserve* salvation. Paul described himself as the “*foremost of all*” sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). Even if we could perfectly do what John said we need to do to be confident of our salvation – practice righteousness (1 John 2:29) – we will never *earn* salvation. Jesus said, “*So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done’*” (Luke 17:10). Even doing all that the Lord has instructed us to do, we are still “*unworthy slaves*.” However, since we have all sinned (Romans 3:23), we have earned the “*wages of sin*” (Romans 6:23). Therefore, salvation – despite its conditional nature – is by *grace* because it is undeserved (Ephesians 2:8-9).

We can – and must – recognize our unworthiness of God’s grace and the hope of heaven. At the same time, we can have confidence in the reward.

### **Conclusion**

God will keep His promises (Hebrews 6:18). Therefore, if we want to have confidence in our salvation, we need to trust in Him and practice righteousness. We need to examine ourselves (2 Corinthians 13:5) with an honest heart to make sure we are living in such a way that we can have confidence in our salvation despite our unworthiness before Him.