

ASSURANCE!

HOW WE CAN KNOW THAT WE ARE SAVED?

So often it is the first test after trusting the Lord. Doubts are also fairly common amongst elderly saints.

They might come during a period of illness or as the result of an attack from Satan. (The last thing that Satan wants is a Christian enjoying his / her salvation for that person will be effective in witnessing!)

a). Some wonder if they have ever really trusted the Lord. It is good for such a person to read John's Gospel – a chapter a day – going right through the book. Note ch:20 v 31 – 'these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing ye might have life through His name'.. As the Word of God is read we need to ask God to reveal the Saviour & His salvation to us.

To make mistake in this matter is so awful to contemplate. There is no chance of a change in position after we die.

b). Doubts may come but we should not dwell on them – we should turn to the promises of the Word of God. Instead of 'I hope so' - 'I know so'. Instead of 'maybe' – 'I'm sure'. Our salvation does not depend on our feelings - they can change quicker than the weather – rather is it based upon the Saviour's work on the cross.

There are passages in scripture, which seem on the surface to indicate that it is possible to be saved and then to be lost. This is always the result of wrong interpretation. *A fundamental rule of interpretation is that we never give a passage that is difficult to understand, a meaning which will contradict a passage that is clear.*

It is possible for a person to make a profession and not be saved. E.G. Simon in Acts ch:8. He believed and was baptised. He had deceived Philip. Peter was used to expose him – v 20 to 23.

Notice v 24 'pray ye to the Lord for me' – he did not pray for himself.

[Note: There may be three aspects to our experience of trusting the Lord. People might:

A). Have a mental understanding of the truth of God.

B). Be affected emotionally as they think of their sin deserving the wrath of God, and necessitating the death of the Saviour.

C). Exercise an act of will – actually trust themselves to the Saviour. Whatever of A) and B) might be involved in a persons experience – they are not saved until C) - the act of commitment!]

There are those who state that Judas was saved and then lost. It is remarkable that he lived with the Lord Jesus Christ for three and a half years and yet was not saved. He preached – worked miracles. (Matthew ch:7 v 21 - 23). Involvement in God's work is not a 100% guarantee of being saved. John 17 v 12 – Judas is described as 'The son of perdition'. Acts ch:1 v 25 – 'he went to the place of his choosing'. He had given evidence of remorse – but had not repented (Matthew ch:27 v 3, 4).

It is possible for a person to be saved and backslide. They are still saved. Philemon v 24, Demas is described as Paul's fellow labourer, but in 2nd Timothy ch:4 v 10. 'Demas hath forsaken me having loved this present world'. If we are cold in heart we need to pray like

David (Psalm 51 v 12, 'Restore unto me the JOY of Thy salvation'). Note: 1st John ch:2 v 15b 'If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him'.

There are passages which seem to indicate that people can be saved and lost. For example:

a). John ch:15 v 2. Note: 'taken away' could be translated 'lifted up'. God wants to take the backsliders interest away from the world and cause him / her to totally depend upon Christ for their life. V 6, It is men that gather the prunings of the vineyard – not the Lord, to whom all judgement has been given – John ch:5 v 22.

b). Philippians ch:2 v 12b. 'work out...'. The word, 'salvation' in the New Testament, not only refers to spiritual blessing - it can also refer to the 'solution to a problem'. In Philippi there was the difficulty of two sisters not getting on – ch:4 v 2. *The whole epistle can be viewed as Paul seeking to deal with this matter.*

c). Hebrews ch:6 v 4 – 6. The answer is in v 9 'But beloved we are persuaded better things of you and things that accompany salvation'. *Note: Often the answer to a difficulty is in the passage itself!*

There are those who claim that it is presumption to say that you are saved. 1st John ch:5 v 12, 'He that hath the Son hath life and he that hath not the Son hath not life'. For a believer to say that they are not saved / or can loose their salvation is to deny the clear teaching of scripture.

Can a person be saved – then sin and thus loose his / her salvation? No! 1st John ch:3 v 9 – 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin'. The Christian does not habitually practice sin. A Christian is not sinless but should sin less! What happens when a believer does sin? 1st John ch:2 v 1 'If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous'.

No believer can commit the 'unpardonable sin'. Mark ch:3 v 28 to 30. There were those who witnessed the Saviour's miracles done in the power of the Spirit of God and they attributed them to Satan.

(We cannot know 100% that a particular person is saved. 'By their fruits ye shall know them'. We have the confidence – 2nd Timothy ch:2 v 19. 'The Lord knoweth them that are His'.

1st John presents us with seven tests – do we fulfil them?

1). Ch:2 v 3 – 'We know that we know Him if we keep His commandments' - Have we the desire to do His will?

2). Ch2 v 5 – 'keep His word' – Have we respect for the truth of God?

3). Ch:2 v 29 – 'do righteousness' – Is the righteous character of God seen in our lives?

4). Ch:3 v 9 – Do we habitually practice sin?

5). Ch:3 v 14 – 'We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren'. Do we love other Christians?

6). Ch:4 v 6. - Do we heed God's messages?

7). Ch:5 v 4. - 'Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world' – Are we constantly seeking the pleasures / treasures of the world or do we find our satisfaction in the Saviour and His things.

Are we giving evidence that we are saved? Note: We have the responsibility for our own spiritual development – Jude v20, 21.

Turning to the positive. There are three matters we wish to consider regarding assurance of salvation.

1). The Word of God PROCLAIMS it.

- 2). The Work of Christ PROVIDED it.
- 3). The Witness of the Holy Spirit PROVES it.

1). The Word of God PROCLAIMS it. We take God at His word – He cannot lie. The scriptures cannot be broken. The truth comes from an unchanging and an unchangeable God.

a). Salvation is presented as an eternal / everlasting blessing. John ch:3 v 15, v 16, v 36; ch:4 v 13, 14; ch:5 v 24; ch:6 v 47. Every believer has eternal life now and will have an even greater experience of it in the future – Titus ch:1 v 2 – ‘in hope of eternal life’.

b). Salvation is a gift. Ephesians ch:2 v 8. ‘It is the gift of God’. The Lord Jesus knows His sheep – He discriminates between them and those who are not His. John ch:10 v 28. ‘I give unto them eternal life’. Note it is not a matter of us holding on to the Lord – but of the Lord holding on to us!
Romans ch:11 v 28, ‘the gifts and calling of God are without repentance’.

2). The Work of Christ PROVIDED it. Salvation in no way depends upon us!
Ephesians ch:1 v 7. - ‘In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sin, according to the riches of His grace’.
Hebrews ch:7 v 24. – ‘He is able to save to the uttermost’.
Romans ch:5 v 1 – There is no condemnation, v2, We have the privilege of prayer – ‘we rejoice in hope of the glory of God’.
Note: When we trust the Lord – the Bible declares that we are ‘in Christ’ – a permanent state.
(In 1st Corinthians ch:12 v 12, we are members of a body. No member can by itself, remove itself from the body!)

3). The Witness of the Holy Spirit PROVES it. 1st John ch:3 v24, ‘Hereby we know that He abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us’. Ephesians ch:1 v 13 – ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise (also ch:4 v 30).

‘If all the SHALLS in scripture meant PERHAPS
And all the HATHS meant simply HOPES TO HAVE
And all the ARE’S depended on an IF – I well might doubt.
But since our Saviour – God, means what He says and cannot lie
I trust His faithful Word and know that I
Shall surely dwell to all eternity
With Him whose love led Him for me to die
E’en Christ Himself’.

The Gospel message still goes out – ‘Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved’. We do our part – we call – then God does His part – He saves.

Saving faith looks away from self and trusts implicitly the Saviour.

When we exercise faith in Christ, we are not only **saved** but also **safe** for evermore.

‘What from Christ the soul can sever – Bound by everlasting bonds?
Once in Him, in Him forever – Thus the eternal covenant stands
None shall pluck thee, None shall pluck thee from the Saviour’s mighty hands’.

Paul could say – 1st Timothy ch:1 v 12. - ‘I know Whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day’.

Philippians ch:1 v 6. 'Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Christ'.

DOUBT sees the obstacle, FAITH sees the way,
DOUBT sees the darkest night – FAITH sees the day;
DOUBT dreads to take a step, FAITH soars on high,
DOUBT questions – Who believes? FAITH answers – 'I'.

Schofield give this definition of assurance: 'It is the believers immovable inborn conviction that by faith he is in possession of a salvation in which he will be eternally kept'.

Note: 1st John ch:5 v 13 – 'These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye might know that you have eternal life'.

Read: Romans ch:8 v 35 – 39, + Jude v 24, 25.

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