

## **SALVATION**

**Needless Doubting vs. False Assurance**

**Saving Faith vs. Superficial Faith**

***If you really believe in heaven and hell,  
how can you not be desperate to know which one you are headed to?***

## CONCERN WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

- Only two alternatives – heaven or hell!!
- Some seem assured of a salvation they give no evidence of having
- Superficial confession of faith at best
  - “Sure, I believe in God and Jesus” i.e. intellectual acknowledgement, mental ascent
- Rarely, if ever, attend a church
- Rarely, if ever, read the Bible
- Don’t associate/fellowship with other believers
- Lifestyles don’t differ in any significant way from those outside the church.

## Book - “23 Minutes in Hell”

- YouTube Video - “Bill Wiese at Shekinah Worship Center - 23 Minutes in Hell”

## ATTRIBUTES OF HELL ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE

Separated from God for eternity

Literal fire

Everlasting torment

Indescribable fear

Moaning, screaming, gnashing of teeth

Mind consumed with terror

Only brief moments to reflect on past

Never lose consciousness

Always dying but never able to die

Maggots (consuming your flesh for eternity)

Not one drop of water

Total isolation

No purpose

No mercy

Utter confusion

Indescribable putrid and foul odors

Unable to breathe

Presence of demons – bizarre and terrifying

Keener senses

Comprehension of eternity

Aware of existence of an entire world in hell

No strength

Total exhaustion

No sleep or rest

## **FOUR CASE STUDIES**

### **Example 1**

- 25 year Senior Executive for Campus Crusade for Christ
- Traveled the country, performed great work for the kingdom
- Has since turned away from his faith
  - Doubts Jesus was the son of God and Savior of mankind
  - Doubts the Bible was God-breathed, inerrant and authoritative
  - Doubts that there is an afterlife – doubts the existence of heaven and hell
- Does not attend a church
- Does read the bible to critique the content only

### **Example 2**

- Child attended church camp every summer from 3<sup>rd</sup> grade thru 9<sup>th</sup> grade
- Responded to an altar call every summer professing his faith in Christ
- But did not result in any change in how he lived his life
- Only attended church the rest of the year because required to do so by his parents
- Partied heavily during high school and college
- No active faith walk – bible study, prayer or fellowship

### **Example 3**

- Grandma was a wonderful person – known for doing so many good things for so many people
- She went to an evangelical church just about every Sunday
- As such, she heard the gospel message of salvation on many occasions during her lifetime
- However, she did not participate in any church activities outside of attending church on Sunday mornings
- She didn't own a Bible that she was aware of and really didn't take the time to pray

#### Example 4

- Example given in book “23 Minutes in Hell”
- Young man in his 20s
- Cursed like a sailor, tattoos all over his body, boasted continually about how many girls he was sleeping with
- “Don't worry about me and my salvation. I went to youth camp when I was 13 and I asked Jesus to come into my heart. And I was legit. I became a super – Christian. I went to youth group every week, I did the “true love waits” commitment thing, I memorized verses, and I went on mission trips. I even led other friends to Jesus.”
- “About two years after that, however, I discovered sex. And I didn't like the idea of God telling me who I could have sex with. So I decided to put God on hold for a while, and after a while just quit believing in Him altogether. I am a happy atheist now.”
- “But here's what's awesome: the church I grew up in was Southern Baptist, and they taught eternal security – that means ‘once saved, always saved’ “
- “That means that my salvation at age 13 still holds, even if I don't believe in God anymore now.’ Once saved, always saved,’ right? That means that even if you're right, and God exists and Jesus is the only way, I'm safe! So either way, it works out great for me....If I'm right, then I haven't wasted my life curbing my lifestyle because of a fairytale.”

### **Needless Doubting vs. False Assurance**

The enemy, one of whose names in Scripture is “the deceiver,” loves to keep truly saved believers unsure of their salvation because he knows that if he does, they will never experience the freedom, joy, and confidence that God wants them to have. But he also loves to keep those on their way to hell deluded into thinking they are on their way to heaven, their consciences immunized from Jesus’s plea to repent.

## "SIMPLE" SALVATION SCRIPTURES

The New Testament writers all boldly declare that salvation is obtained by **believing** in Jesus as Lord. Paul's words in Romans 10 are perhaps the simplest, most straightforward explanation in the Bible of what someone must "do" to be saved: confess and **believe**.

If you **confess** with your mouth the Lord Jesus and **believe** in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Romans 10:9-10)

He who **believes** in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him. (John 3:36)

Sirs, what must I do to be saved?....**Believe** on the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household. (Acts 16:30-31)

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever **believes** in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. He who **believes** in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:16 & 18)

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and **believes** in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. (John 5:24)

These things I have written to you who **believe** in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. (1 John 5:13)

For whoever **calls on the name of the Lord** shall be saved. (Romans 10:13)

And it shall come to pass that whoever **calls on the name of the Lord** shall be saved. (Acts 2:21)

The Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you **seek Him**, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever. (1 Chronicles 28:9b)

### SOUNDS SIMPLE ENOUGH - JUST BELIEVE!

But is that it? Mentally acknowledging that Jesus was God's Son and died on the cross for our sin? Nearly 80% of Americans say they believe that, though for many, it makes little difference in their lives. They "believe" Jesus rose from the dead like they believe Napoleon lost the battle of Waterloo. Is this all that Paul meant?

Clearly not. Jesus' half – brother, James, claims that even the demons "believe" in this way, and tremble – but we're not going to be hanging out with them in heaven (James 2:19).

## THE MOST CONCERNING SCRIPTURES IN THE BIBLE

- One of the most disturbing narratives in the Bible is on the Day of Judgment.
- **MANY** people will come before Jesus and say, “Lord, Lord” and he’s going to respond with the most devastating words anyone could ever hear - **“I DON’T KNOW WHO YOU ARE, DEPART FROM ME”**.
- What’s the problem? **“I NEVER KNEW YOU!”**

### "I Never Knew You"

Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. **MANY** will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and performed miracles in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, **‘I NEVER KNEW YOU’**; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness! (Mathew 7:21 – 23)

And He said to them, “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for **MANY**, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open for us,’ and He will answer and say to you, **“I DO NOT KNOW YOU**, where you are from” then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.’ But He will say, ‘I tell you **I DO NOT KNOW YOU**, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity.’ There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. (Luke 13:24-28)

### "The Narrow Gate"

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are **MANY** who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and **DIFFICULT IS THE WAY** which leads to life, and **THERE ARE FEW WHO FIND IT**. (Mathew 7: 13-14)

**Notice here that the people Jesus condemns were actively involved in ministry, but they were not genuine believers. They had a superficial faith—they acknowledged who Jesus is—but they had no relationship with Him. Jesus does not say that at one time He knew them, but then He later rejected them. He says, “I never knew you.” They were never saved to begin with.**

## **EXAMINE YOURSELVES AS TO WHETHER YOU ARE REALLY IN THE FAITH**

- Paul writes, “Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?” (2 Corinthians 13:5).
- If we want confidence about our spiritual situation, we need to do more than look back to some words we said in the past when we “accepted Christ”
- We need to examine our current condition to see if there is evidence of God’s work in our lives today—changing us from within, convicting us of sin, and drawing us to repentance.

There is a series of tests in 1 John that we can use to examine ourselves and our faith.

As we look at them, remember that no one will perfectly fulfill all of them all the time, but they should reveal a consistent trend that characterizes our lives as we grow in grace.

- **Do you enjoy having fellowship with Christ through prayer? (1 John 1:3)**
- **Do you enjoy spending time in His word? (1 John 1:3)**
- **Do you enjoy having fellowship with his redeemed people? (1 John 1:3)**
- **Would people say you walk in the light, or walk in the darkness? (1 John 1:6-7)**
- **Do you admit and confess your sin? (1 John 1:8)**
- **Are you obedient to God's Word? (1 John 2:3-5)**
- **Does your life indicate you love God rather than the world? (1 John 2:15)**
- **Is your life characterized by "doing what is right"? (1 John 2:29)**
- **Do you seek to maintain a pure life? (1 John 3:3)**
- **Do you see a decreasing pattern of sin in your life? (1 John 3:5-6)**  
[Note: this refers to not continuing in sin as a way of life, not a total absence of sin.]
- **Do you demonstrate love for other Christians? (1 John 3:14)**
- **Do you "walk the walk," versus just "talking the talk"? (1 John 3:18-19)**
- **Do you maintain a clear conscience? (1 John 3:21)**
- **Do you experience victory in your Christian walk? (1 John 5:4)**



If you are able to truthfully answer "Yes" to these questions (or a majority of them, and are working on the others), then your life is bearing the fruit of true salvation. Jesus said that it is by our fruits that we are known as His disciples (Matthew 7:20). Fruitless branches—professing believers who do not display the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) are cut off and thrown into the fire (John 15:6).

A genuine faith is one that not only believes in God (the devils themselves do that - James 2:19) but leads to open confession of sin and obedience to Christ's commands. Remember, we are saved by grace through faith, not by our works (Ephesians 2:8-9), but our works should display the reality of our salvation (James 2:17) Genuine saving faith will always produce works; a faith that is perpetually without works is no faith at all and saves no one.

You can boil down John's list of heart changes into essentially two categories:

**#1 - A Love for God**

The new, living heart is characterized by a deep, personal love for God. Correspondingly sin begins to take on a certain hollowness, even dreadfulness.

**#2 - A Love for Others**

Another sign you have been born again, the apostle John says, is that you start to love others, particularly believers.

## MISCELANEOUS NUGGETS

Many people know about God, but don't know God

It is true that "once saved, always saved"; but it is also true that "once saved, forever following."

Salvation is a posture of repentance and faith toward Christ that you adopt at your conversion and maintain for a lifetime. If you permanently abandon that posture later in life, your faith was likely not saving faith.

Salvation does indeed happen in a moment, and once you are saved you are always saved. The mark, however, of someone who is saved is that they maintain their confession of faith until the end of their lives.

Mathew 7 says, "Difficult is the way" which leads to life. So, is it really as simple as believing in Jesus and confessing/calling upon His name to receive salvation?

The difference between 'religion' and 'relationship'

- Intellectual acknowledgement / mental ascent vs. intimacy & fellowship

2 Kinds of Belief in Jesus:

- Yes, I believe in him - he was a historical figure, a great man, a great teacher, a great prophet
- Embrace Jesus as the Son of God and the Savior of mankind

God has left us clues:

- "Depart from me because I don't know you"
  - THIS IS VITALLY IMPORTANT – TO BE KNOWN BY HIM!
- John 13:35, "Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples"

Until you know Jesus as Messiah, you don't know Him!

## **BOOK "STOP ASKING JESUS INTO YOUR HEART" - J.D. GREER**

### **MISCELLANEOUS NOTES**

#### **SINNERS PRAYER**

Nowhere does the Bible say we have to voice a prayer to be saved. The posture of repentance and belief saves.

Just because we pray the sinner's prayer does not necessarily mean we have repented and believed.

It is the relationship to Christ that saves, not the prayer that signified the beginning of that relationship.

Salvation is not a prayer you prayed in a one-time ceremony and then move on from. Salvation is a posture of repentance and faith that you begin in a moment and maintain for the rest of your life.

"Praying the sinner's prayer" has become something like a Protestant ritual we have people go through to gain entry into heaven. As "gospel shorthand," it presents salvation as a transaction one conducts with Jesus and moves on from rather than the beginning of a posture we take toward the finished work of Christ and maintain for the rest of our lives.

Don't make the mistake of equating that prayer with the posture of repentance and faith. The sinner's prayer is not a magic incantation or a recipe you follow to get a salvation cake. The real stuff – the stuff that matters – is the posture behind the words you speak. The prayer is good only insofar as it verbalizes the posture.

The flipside is also true: just because we haven't prayed that prayer or can't remember praying it, doesn't mean we haven't repented and believed. "Repentance and belief" and "asking Jesus into our hearts" are not always interchangeable.

#### **ASSURANCE**

There are three primary bases for assurance; these three combined provide a powerful sense of assurance that we belong to God:

- 1) A present posture of faith and repentance
- 2) Perseverance in the faith
- 3) Evidences of eternal life in our heart – a love for God and a love for others, particularly other believers.

Our perseverance in holy living is not the basis of our salvation, but it is a source of our assurance.

If you base your assurance on what you do or how well you do it, i.e. your performance, you'll never find assurance.

If you want to know for sure that you are saved, maintain your posture of repentance towards God and faith in Christ.

#### **WORKS – FRUIT - EVIDENCE**

If we believe, we will obey. If we do not obey, we don't believe.

The lack of change in a person's life proves they have not experienced Him.

The faith that saves will never be alone, that is, alone without good works.

Following Jesus is about much more than accepting a gift. A dramatic change of life and radical commitment to the mission is always the fruit of a heart changed by faith.

If Jesus Christ is really in you, then you will show evidences of that by loving what, and whom, He loves and seeking whom and what He seeks.

Where there is no righteous behavior, there has been no change of heart. And where there has been no heart change, there has been no salvation.

Spirit-generated belief will always result in a new heart – a heart that loves good works and pursues them for Jesus' sake. It is impossible for spirit-generated faith to not lead to these good works, so if they are absent, so is genuine faith.

The presence of the struggle with sin can be affirmation that God's spirit is at work within you. When God's spirit lives in you, you feel the tension of that struggle every day. The struggle is not an indication that you are not saved; it is, in fact, the evidence that you are.

### **REPENTANCE**

Repentance is belief in action.... it means "acting" on that belief **and** reversing your direction based on who you understand Jesus to be. Apart from repentance there is no salvation.

Biblical repentance is not merely a request for exoneration, it is a change of heart about our sin. Even confession of our sin to Jesus, soaked with tears, but apart from a change of attitude toward our sin, will not bring about eternal life. Confession is part of the repentance process, but not the sum total of it.

### **PERSEVERANCE**

A true believer can never be lost, but a true believer also will never stop following Jesus.

Scripture does not teach that you can lose your salvation. But it does teach you something important about the nature of saving faith: saving faith always endures to the end.

Many go through the initial motions of salvation, yet, after a period of time, fall back into their old ways. Such a person was never really saved to begin with, despite all their earthly, initial excitement.

The difference between saving faith and superficial faith has little to do with the intensity of emotion at its beginning and everything to do with its duration over time. Faith that fades, no matter how luscious its first fruits, is not saving faith.

Praying a prayer to ask Jesus into your heart, even if it's followed by a flurry of emotion and religious fervor is no proof that you are saved. Enduring in that faith to the end is.

As we persevere to the end, we maintain that full assurance of hope. Persevering in the faith continually reassures us of our salvation.

In every congregation there are people who get caught up in the movement without experiencing true conversion. They get excited, learn the songs, pray the sinner's prayer, get baptized, and maybe even get involved in the mission, but these never translate into a deep, personal embrace of Jesus Christ. Over time, their enthusiasm fades.