

BLESSED ASSURANCE

by
Francis Goodrick
(deceased)

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What is the Meaning of Assurance?

An essential and immensely important question that every Christian must face is: Are there going to be children of God in Hell? Is the Christian's eternal destiny based on his good works, as many teach, or only on the finished work of Christ on Calvary? Can a Christian become unsaved and perish? Or does he have total assurance that he will go to heaven? This is a most solemn question, and certainly on its answer depends our peace of mind.

If our reaching heaven is dependent on our maintaining good works until we die, how MANY good works must we do, and how GOOD must they be? Is heaven a reward or a gift? Where in the Bible is an example of a Christian being born again more than once, or where does it say that he can be born more than once? Or where does it say that we should "Keep Saved" or "He made it Through"? Did God give or just loan His Son to us Who can be taken from us if we don't "Live the Life"?

If, as the Bible says, our human nature is so weak and corrupt that it cannot save us; how can we think that it is possible for our weak human nature to keep us saved? If, as Heb. 10. 1-4 declares, the blood of animal sacrifices satisfied the Israelite's conscience for a year, how much more should Christ's blood satisfy the believer's conscience forever? If the Innumerable company of Rev.

chapter 7 got to heaven only because their robes were washed white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7.14), can we think that we can get there by any other means -good works, holding out faithful, etc.? This is the final proof that all who get there, get there by Jesus' blood and by nothing else.

When I was a young man I worked with a veterinarian, son of a holiness preacher. He said to me, "I gave up being a Christian because I thought that if I had to go to an altar every six months to be saved over, there was no use of me trying any longer." Under such teaching, how many others have given up in despair "Trying to Keep Saved?"

Objections to the Teaching of Eternal Assurance

Those who object to the teaching of eternal assurance claim that it teaches Christians to live as they please. But this is a false accusation against the message of assurance. The objectors to eternal assurance think the only way to get Christians to live godly lives is to constantly threaten them with going to hell, but Christ and the apostles didn't do this - this was absolutely contrary to their teaching. Furthermore, because the advocates of eternal assurance don't threaten Christians with hell, they, therefore, believe that they encourage their followers to live as they please. This is false.

Is getting Christians to fear hell the way the Bible got Christians to live for God? No! The Bible does not teach that the Christian is to serve God because he fears hell but because he loves God. Does the fear of the law

and imprisonment make a good mother take care of her fatherless children or does love? Love of course. She doesn't need the threat of the law because she loves to take care of them. So likewise the grace saint loves to serve his Savior and Lord.

What answers do grace people give those who accuse them of encouraging Christians to backslide? (1) When an honest-hearted Christian sees the grace of God that not only saves but also keeps him saved, he cannot but appreciate and love the Lord and hate sin and backsliding. (2) Grace inspires him to live for the Lord and deny ungodliness. *"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world,' looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ"* (Titus 2.11-13). (3) Furthermore, they also stand on Paul's answer to his critics: *"For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my life unto his glory, why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just"* (Rom. 3.7,8). If Paul was accused of teaching that we should sin that grace might abound, we aren't surprised if we are accused of the same terrible slander. (4) Remember, grace is the Only Means by which a Christian can overcome evil; all other means are self-effort and of the flesh! God hates the flesh! God is only pleased with the dependent attitude of grace. (5) Paul's testimony was: *"I am what I am by the grace of God"* (1 Cor. 15. 10). He depended on God's grace for his salvation and the keeping of his soul. Grace is not lawlessness but the inspiration to live a life pleasing to God.

How Does God Deal with the Believer's Sins?

The Bible teaches that God chastises the believer when he sins, not that he sends him to hell. Read Heb. 12.5-12. Sin, especially the sin of unbelief, is going to send the sinner to hell, but sin is not going to send the believer to hell, but is going to bring the chastening hand of God upon him. God sends the Christ rejecter to hell, but He whips His children. We don't kill our son because he is a prodigal son; neither does God, though He will severely chastise him.

Let us look at two examples of chastisement in the Bible: Solomon and the Corinthian church. In 2 Sam. 7.14, 15 God spoke to David concerning his son, Solomon, saying: *"I will be his Father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chastise him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men. But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul whom I put away from before thee."* Solomon was not to be destroyed but chastened, for God's mercy was not to be taken from him.

What does the Lord say about the Corinthians who ate the Lord's supper in an unworthy manner? He says that for this cause many of them were weak and sickly and some slept, that is died under His chastening hand (1 Cor. 11.31,32). Notice that in v. 32 that though the Lord judged them He did not judge them with the world or as the world. *"But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world"* (v.32). The world's judgment will be at the Great White Throne judgment of God, but the Lord is chastening His people right now who are sinning.

We find also that the Lord severs fellowship with the believer when he sins - and it is a terrible dark experience to be out of fellowship with the Lord. "*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*" (Amos 3.3). "*If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin*" (1 John 1.7). Therefore by walking in darkness a Christian loses fellowship with the Lord, and with his fellow Christians, but his relationship as a child of God is unaltered.

Furthermore, 1 Cor. 3.15 tells us that the Lord will judge a Christian who builds only wood, hay, or stubble on the foundation of Christ by burning all his works, but his soul will be saved as by fire. Notice that the Lord says that He is going to judge the believer's works, not his soul. See, the Christian is not working for salvation but for a reward. How terrible it will be for a Christian to come before the Lord at His coming with empty hands, his works all burnt up, and knowing that he got there with no reward.

Therefore, from what has been said in the previous paragraphs, we see that God deals with the sins of the believer by chastisement, by severing fellowship with him, by premature death, and by burning all his works. We know that if we walk after the flesh that we are going to suffer for doing so, so the grace of God does not encourage us for one moment to live carelessly.

A Believer Will Get to Heaven Only Because He is a New Creation

Only the new creation, this new life, is fit for heaven; no sin will enter there. When we die we will leave

this old creation, this fleshly nature behind, and we will put on a new body and enter heaven. *"Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God"* (1 John 3.9). *"His seed"* refers to this new life, this Christ-life, within us, and that is the only life of the believer that does not sin. We Christians are going to heaven, not because of our good works, but because we have this Christ-life within.

Remember, as far as being perfectly sin-less in order to get to heaven, the Scripture says that *"there is no man that sinneth not"* (1 Kings 8.46). *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us"* (1 John 1.8). Remember, if a Great Sin can separate us from Christ and send us to hell, so can the Smallest Sin separate us from Christ and damn our souls. No sin can enter heaven. Aren't you glad therefore we have the assurance of going to our heavenly home?

Did Jesus Die for All Your Sins?

Someone asks, "What about the sins I have committed since I became a Christian? Did Jesus atone for them also?"

Christ atoned for all our sins and God justified us once and for all and has completely settled the sin question in our behalf when we accepted His Son as our Savior. All our sins, everyone of them that we will ever commit, were cast into the depths of the sea and will be remembered against us no more forever (Micah 7.19; Heb. 10.17).

But we ask you, "How long ago did Jesus die for your sins?" It was before you had committed any sins - nineteen hundred years ago. And did He die for just part of your sins or for all of them? Christ, our Surety, paid for our full sin-debt, past, present, and future. Did Jesus die only for those sins which He knew you would commit before you were saved, or also for the sins of your whole life? *"If He died only for the sins which He knew you would commit before you were saved, but not for the sins after you were saved; then when must Jesus die again to make atonement for these sins, which He did not atone for on the cross? You see, all your sins were borne by Him at Calvary, past, present, and future, before we were even born."* -Dr. De Haan. God would not have raised His Son from the dead if He had not fully atoned for all our sins.

God Always Sees the Believer Justified in Christ

Rom. 3.24 declares that God justifies the believing sinner freely by His grace because Christ redeemed him. *"To be justified is to be reckoned or accounted righteous before God." The justified believer had been in court, and the Judge Himself had counted him righteous for Christ's sake. Wonder-full! Think of it. This was the act of God alone. Justification is God's attitude toward the believer, and His attitude never changes"* - Dr. W. H. Griffeth Thomas. Justification is the believer's New Standing before God. Eph. 1.6 declares that the believer is accepted in the Beloved, and we can add, that he will never be UNaccepted in the Beloved. Impossible: for God sees the believer clothed with Christ's righteousness, and, therefore, he must be always accepted. God sees us through Christ, the Go-between God and man, and therefore, we must be accepted. We are justified once and

for all, and forever. We read: "*know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be forever*" (Eccl. 3.14). "*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?*" (Rom. 8.33, 34). Not all the demons in hell, nor angels in heaven, nor men on earth can condemn the justified in Christ!

What are some of the results of justification? For one, Heb. 4.16 tells us that we can come boldly to the throne of grace in every time of need. But how can we come boldly to God's throne of grace at any time if it is not because we always come in Christ's righteousness and not in our own? Then Heb. 10. 17 tells us that our sins are remembered against us no more forever. Why? Because our sins were laid on Christ, our Substitute dying in our stead, Who bore them all away. Heb. 7.25 declares that Christ has saved us to the uttermost, because He ever lives to make intercession for us. To doubt the believer's acceptance in the presence of God at any time is to question the effectiveness of Christ's intercession for us - which is unthinkable! For the believer always stands justified and accepted in the sight of God. (We never read in the Bible of a Christian losing his justification or of him being justified more than once!) If any believer can come boldly at any time to the Throne of Grace because of his acceptance in Christ's worthiness; if his sins are remembered against him no more forever; if Christ his High Priest ever lives to intercede for him, how can he ever be lost?

God Sees the Believer Only as a Saint

We find in the New Testament, as well as in places in the Old Testament, that God speaks of His children as

being saints, even though sometimes they didn't act like saints. The word "saint" in the Greek means "holy one". In 1 Cor. 1.2, the Corinthians are called saints, not "*called to be saints*," as we read in the King James Version. The words "*to be*" are in italics, which indicates that they were inserted by the translator and, as a matter of fact, were not in the Greek text. Yet these saints in 1 Cor. 3.3 are said to be carnal and said to walk as men.

In the sixth chapter of this book, after Paul lists eleven different sins, a number of which the Corinthians had committed, we read: "*And such were some of you: but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God*" (1 Cor. 6.11). Paul meant that in the new creation, they were washed, sanctified, and justified, but in the old creation nevertheless, he knew that they acted like anything but saints - they were guilty of division, fornication, eating things offered to idols, becoming drunk on the Lord's supper, and were doubters of the resurrection. Yet, in the sight of God, as to and only as to their standing, they were sanctified; they were justified; they were saints!

The Holy Spirit brings out the same thought about Israel in Numbers 23.21. Baalam was made to prophesy that wonderful statement concerning Israel, that God had not beheld iniquity nor seen perverseness in Israel; though God had previously said that they had tempted Him ten times (Num. 14.22). As to their stand, God did not see their iniquity and perverseness because they were under the blood of the Passover lamb, the redeemed people of God. So it is the same with us today.

Meaning of Redemption Manifests Security of Believer

The Greek meaning of the word "redemption" also reveals the assurance of the believer. According to the Scofield Reference Bible and also by checking with any Greek lexicon, you will find that there are three Greek words which are translated redemption: "agorazo, exagorazo, and lu-troo." (1) "Agorazo" means "to purchase in the market." The thought underlying this word is that of a sinner being bought in a slave market. Rom. 7.14 tells us that we were "sold under sin." Ezk. 18.4. and John 3.18, 19 and Rom. 3.19 and Gal. 3.10 show that we were under condemnation, judgment, and death. But Christ our Redeemer paid the purchase price of our redemption, His own precious blood, by dying in our stead on the cross (Gal. 3.13; 1 Pt. 1.18). (2) "Exagorazo" means "to buy OUT of the market." The redeemed are bought OUT of the slave market, never again to be exposed to sale. Think of that. Never! (3) "Lutroo" means "to loose," "to set free by paying a price" (John 8.32; Rom. 8.21). So the redeemed ones are bought in the slave market and, therefore, belong to the Lord. They are bought out of the slave market, and, therefore, the Lord has taken them to Himself. And they are set free - flee from all condemnation.

God never sold Israel back to Egypt and Pharaoh.
Neither shall He sell us back to the world and Satan.

Examples of Stumbling Believers Who Were Yet Saved

Let us now look in the Bible to see if we can find any examples of stumbling believers who some would say

went to hell. We are not looking at these examples to point out their backslidings, to justify them, or to excuse them. But we look at their failures as warnings and also encouragements to us when we see that the Lord gave them another chance to live for Him and how they were brought back to the Lord.

Noah failed the Lord. After leaving the ark, he got drunk and lay naked where his youngest son could see him. We deplore Noah's letting down of his moral standards, but there is no evidence that God rejected him completely, for after this he made his prophecies concerning his three sons, which God fulfilled to the letter. Proof God did not reject him.

No one in the Bible had the Holy Spirit come upon him as much as Samson did and in such powerful ways. And no one in the Bible with similar blessings yielded to the flesh as he did. He constantly defiled his high Nazarite consecration.

Would you say that he went to hell? God still must have been with him because he had faith to pray. God must still have been with him even in his last moments; for when he prayed for strength to push over the two pillars of the temple, God answered him by giving him the strength to do so. Therefore, he must not have been rejected. When dying and praying for vengeance on his enemies, God granted his request by enabling him to kill 3,000 Philistines. His name is also listed with the believers and "worthies" of faith in Heb. 11.32. These, to me, are conclusive proofs that I shall see him in heaven.

David also failed the Lord, committed both adultery and murder. God was very angry with him, and,

as a result, David suffered the rest of his life. But does the Bible ever say that he was lost?

David in Ps. 51.12 prayed that the joy of his salvation might be restored to him, but not his salvation, for he had never lost it. He prayed also (v. 10) that he might have a clean heart and that a right spirit might be renewed within him. He didn't pray that he might have a new heart but a clean heart from the guilty conscience of his sins.

Every saint of God, like David, needs a daily cleansing. Even the priests in the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, and in Solomon's Temple had to wash every day in the laver in order that their services might be acceptable to God. In John 13.10 Jesus taught His disciples that they too needed to wash their feet daily in order that they might be spiritually clean before Him. So David also needed this cleansing of his defiled walk, and this is what he prayed for when he prayed for a clean heart. He also needed a renewing, as we read in the last part of this verse; even as every Christian needs a constant renewing - Isa. 40.31; 2 Cor. 4.16; Eph. 4.12; Col. 3.10. But this cleansing and renewing was an entirely different thing than being born again.

God commanded Jonah to go and preach to the great city of Nineveh, but he deliberately, willfully disobeyed God, taking a ship to Tarshish instead. Did the Lord forsake him? No. But, of course, God did punish him severely. He permitted the sailors to cast him overboard into the sea. God punished him by keeping him in the fish's belly for three days and three nights. But we read: *"Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord HIS GOD out of the*

fish's belly." Notice that the Lord was still his God, even though he was in a backslidden condition. God even heard and answered his prayer and gave him another chance to preach the gospel and mightily used him. So he still must have been a child of God.

Peter, the leader of the twelve apostles, also miserably failed the Lord. What was his spiritual condition when he cursed and denied Christ at His trial? Was he lost? I think not. Jesus had told Peter that he would deny Him. *"And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and that when thou art converted (Gr. "when you have returned to your original position with respect to your faith"); strengthen your brethren"* (Lu.22. 31,32).

When today we use the term "conversion," we refer to salvation; but Jesus was not referring to salvation but to the change of attitude, etc., that Peter would have after his trial. Jesus' prayer for Peter could not be disappointed, and Peter's faith could not fail, though it did weaken. Jesus said also to Peter, *"Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit (that is Peter's new creation life) indeed is willing, but the flesh (Peter's old nature) is weak"* (Matt. 26.41). Peter's flesh is what denied the Lord; Peter's new creation life never did. When Peter denied his Lord, Jesus looked at him, and Peter went out and wept bitterly. If he were lost, he would not have gone out and wept bitterly.

Too, if Peter were lost, the angel on the resurrection morning would not have told the women to *'go your way. tell His disciples and Peter that he goeth*

before you into Galilee; there ye shall see him" (Mk. 16.7). And Jesus, after His resurrection, would not have appeared first to Peter of all His disciples (1 Cor. 15.5; Lu. 24.34).

A Covenant-Keeping God Will Not Allow One Sheep to Perish

If God has always kept His covenant promises, even with unbelieving Israel, surely He will keep His promises with born-again believers today. God made a covenant with Abraham to bless his descendents, to give them the land of Palestine with practically every earthly blessing. This covenant was Unconditional; it was based only on God's goodness and grace to Abraham and to his seed. This covenant showed God's purposes to preserve, prosper and make Israel the leading nation of the world. Other promises in the Old Testament to Israel, confirming the Abrahamic covenant, were that, though they were to be scattered to the four corners of the earth, God would preserve and bring them the second time to their land (Is. 11.10-12). We also read in Hoshea 3.4 that Israel would be without a king, a prince, and a sacrifice for many days and after that they would return to their land.

So surely today we have proof that God fulfilled, or is in the process of fulfilling, all these covenant promises to His Ancient people, even though they have miserably failed Him. Israel has returned the second time to her land. She became a nation in 1948. Since then we have seen her victorious in the Six Day War and God preserving her at the present time. Her amazing prosperity is fully detailed in the complete issue of a magazine of last year (1973) in the celebration of her twenty-fifth anni-

versary. In this same issue, Israel confessed that many of her people had departed from the faith of the God of the Old Testament. They also admitted that gross immorality was prevalent in their land. Yet, though God will punish the wicked among Israel, He is still keeping His covenant with Israel.

If God is faithful to backslidden Israel because He is a Covenant-Keeping God and for His namesake, and because He cannot go back on His Word; then the same God, Who is our Father, will not break His promise of eternal life to us who believe on His Son, and He will not allow one sheep of His to perish. To me these facts, right before our eyes, concerning God's faithfulness to undeserving Israel is a most positive proof of the security of the believer and that God will not fail us, His sheep, either.

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