

ETERNAL SECURITY

or

SECURITY OF THE FAITHFUL?

Christians have argued back and forth for centuries concerning the issue of the security of the believer. Some get upset thinking that if a person is given too much assurance they will live like the devil and still expect to be saved. The opposite side argues that a lack of assurance will have sincere saints hanging around the altar, getting re-saved every week and never growing in spiritual maturity. I hope to prove that both extremes are based on the misconception that there is just one kind of faith, when in reality there are several kinds of faith.

How many different kinds of faith are there? In James 2:19 we are told: You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder (NIV). Have you ever considered that demons have faith? We could call it

"Shudder Faith." This faith does not have the power to produce salvation, and it doesn't even have the appearance of faith. Demon faith is similar to what gangsters have toward the police. They know they're there, but they don't like them or trust them. Hebrews 10:38 and 39 talk about two additional kinds of faith:

But My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul.

Can a born again person lose his salvation? Let me ask this question another way using the words of these two verses: Can a righteous one shrink back to destruction? When the author of Hebrews uses the word "if" he makes it clear that some will shrink back and that the result will be destruction. I feel that he clarifies the question for us when he adds the words: but we are...of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul. There are two kinds of faith described in this verse. A faith that shrinks back and a faith that will preserve! If there is only one kind of faith, then we still have a major problem. If there are two or more kinds of faith, then both sides may be right—with certain qualifications.

To prove that I'm not just playing with

words, let me refer you back to James 2:19. Do you believe this verse? Do demons have saving faith? Absolutely not. But, the verse clearly states that they have faith (faith and belief being used interchangeably in the Bible). We must conclude, therefore, that there is a faith that is not sufficient to save.

James' contextual argument is that head-knowledge faith that spouts off warm, loving statements but doesn't have corresponding actions, is dead (see James 2:15 ff.). It can't save. It may be strong enough to produce emotions, such as trembling in demons, or tears in humans. The argument by James is that emotions do not make saving faith. Head knowledge that says, "I believe," and corresponding feelings, "Look, I'm shaking all over," are not sufficient to save one's soul!

What if someone had a mental encounter with the Lord that produced strong feelings? Could they not look back at their experience and claim that they were saved? Of course. But, how can they know for sure? What was the writer of Hebrews saying (10:38)?

But My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him.

Who does the "if he" refer to? Here is a plain old grammar question. Doesn't it

refer back to My righteous one? To be a righteous one, we must live by faith (Romans 1:17 NIV):

For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

Could a "righteous one" live by faith, but not have true saving faith? How could he call them "righteous" if they were not saved? What we mean by "saved" is that a person crosses the finish line still believing! Sometimes we talk of people as though their race is over, but they're still running! If the runner stops before he crosses the finish line, he is disqualified! He lost the race.

If we think that using the word "saved" means that a person does not have to continue believing, we've missed the point of Hebrews 10:38,39. To use the words shrink back requires that the person had first been in a place that they shrunk back from. The author of Hebrews is holding up the superior kind of faith—the kind that perseveres and crosses the finish line! He disdains the other faith that quits. Where does he say the "shrinker" is headed? Destruction! Hell! This is anything but salvation.

The aged Apostle John gives us the same

proof of preserving faith:

They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us. 1 John 2:19

The pressures of life will force a person's true colors to come out. Enticing spirits in the last days will be able to seduce those who have shudder faith or shrink back faith into falling away.

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons... 1 Timothy 4:1

These people were once in the faith, then fell away. They were tricked into turning back. For whatever reason, they shrunk back and proved, in John's words, "they were not of us."

Let no one in any way deceive you, for it will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction... 2 Thessalonians 2:3

The great end time apostasy is a falling away (Greek meaning of apostasy). As with the Hebrews passage, I ask "How can you fall away from some place you haven't

been?" One had to be "in the faith" in order to fall away from the faith. We could say they had faith in their head and the other had it in their heart. That's a good way to look at it; however, the fact remains that one falls away and one remains, but both were in the faith.

How does one perform miracles?

*Does He then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?
Galatians 3:5*

Miracles are produced by faith, right? If that's true, then how did the people in Matthew 7:22,23 do miracles?

Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."

These false disciples used the name of Jesus to do great miracles, including casting out demons. The miracles would require faith, faith in the only source of miracle power—God Almighty! Perhaps this is a fourth kind of faith: miracle producing but "I-never-knew-you" faith!

How could Jesus say that He never knew

them when He knows everything? He knew of them, but He didn't know them in the sense of intimate heart faith that leads to salvation. He might have known them well enough to enter their name in the Book of Life, but when they fell away, He erased their name.

He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels. Revelation 3:5

What is the opposite of an overcomer? A failure? A castaway? A Quitter? One who falls away or turns back?

But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway. 1 Corinthians 9:27 (KJV)

Paul was implying in this verse that to drop out was to become a castaway. He talks later about believing in vain. Believing in vain would be the shudder or shrinkback faith. It's faith because it believed, but it shrinks back and therefore is vain.

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in

which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 1 Corinthians 15:1,2

And working together with Him, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain... 2 Corinthians 6:1

If there are not at least two kinds of faith, then the one who believes that Christians cannot lose their salvation has some answering to do. But, if true believers, the ones with the preserving faith can lose their salvation, then the other side needs to explain these verses:

For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:6

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. 1 Peter 1:23 (KJV)

If we're born again of incorruptible seed, how can it be corrupted? It can't! The truly born again believer who has preserving faith will preserve! He or she will not pay attention to deceiving spirits and fall away. They will not be drawn away or shrink back. Because God began the work, He is more than able to finish the

work. What we must be looking at is that God's part does not start until faith passes from the head to the heart. It might help us to consider this process from the correlation of conception.

In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures. James 1:18

Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. James 1:21

Yes, we're saved by the Word of God, but the Word must be received, not just believed! Many believe but tremble. Many have a head knowledge but are not truly born again. Many will walk alongside true believers for years, but when pressures arise, they will fall away because they have not received the implanted Word that is able to save their soul!

Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not

bear grain. Mark 4:5-7 (NIV)

Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once 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. Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. Mark 4:16-19 (NIV)

A womb may be flooded with seed and there may even be an egg present, but conception only occurs when the egg receives the seed. Scientists tell us that the egg emits a chemical that signals the seed to join with it. No chemical sending the message of a warm reception awaiting...no conception. Too many are just like that. They have been bombarded all their life with the seed of God's Word, yet their heart has never emitted the saving faith that resulted in being truly born again! They taste eternal life, but they do not eat until they receive its life! A starving man needs more than a taste of food...

For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have

been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame. Hebrews 6:4-6

To taste is to partake, but just a taste is not sufficient for life. Poisons can work with just a taste, but life works with assimilation — interaction! Every living thing is partaking of the Holy Spirit. He is everywhere, working, convicting, loving, drawing, seeking! Only those who enter the covenant of salvation with mind-heart-soul are truly born again by the Holy Spirit, born of His incorruptible seed!

Notice in the next verse the confidence that Paul gives out, a confidence that we can experience when we've been tried and tested as he was.

For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day. 2 Timothy 1:12

He's the one who wrote...

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the

faith; 2 Timothy 4:7

Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness." 2 Timothy 2:19

Paul had to keep the faith! And, something overlooked by some, Paul had to "abstain from wickedness"! For sure, God knows those who truly believe, and those who truly believe live like it! They may slip occasionally, but as John says, they do not practice sin—they don't want to sin and see if they can get away with it! (see 1 John 3:4-9).

When our life reflects the quality that James was getting at in James chapter two, we also will have the confidence that Paul and others had. John wrote a very precise epistle in which he delineates guidelines for those who are saved and those who have close-but-no-cigar faith. He states that a true believer will not fall away (chapter 2); cannot live in continual sin, such as hate his brother (chapter three), or deny certain cardinal doctrines (chapter four). He then makes this statement in the last chapter:

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that

you have eternal life. 1 John 5:13

I heard of a recent conversation where a person asked a pastor if a saved person murdered someone, would they be saved. The pastor said yes. But the Scripture came to me as I heard the story (1 John 3:15):

Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Did the fictitious man really have salvation when he killed the supposed person? No, the theoretical man could not have eternal life and the spirit of murder abiding in him at the same time! He may have had demon-faith, but he sure didn't have saving faith!

We can know that we have the preserving kind of faith if we pass the test of the first four chapters of First John! Read, ponder and respond accordingly! If you want preserving faith more than anything else in life, then chances are, you have it! If you will serve Christ regardless of the cost, then indeed you do have preserving faith! When life tests your faith to see what kind it is, and you pass the test by drawing closer to the Lord, for sure you have kept the faith, finished the course and won the prize with your preserving faith!

The people that scare me are those who

always try to see how much they can get away with and still be considered a Christian. You hear them say, "I don't have to go to church to be saved." They live so close to the edge that the least breeze of persecution will blow them away. They are like the young man named Eutychus, who went to sleep in a third story window and fell to his death Acts 20:9). It's a waste of time to try to give assurance to people living on the broad path that leads to destruction, even if they use "religious" terms.

If "carnal" Christians" (1 Corinthians 3:1-3 NKJ) are truly saved, it's by the skin of their teeth. The best advice we could give them is to get away from the edge and go as deep into the love of Jesus as possible. Jesus warned us to look for fruit—good fruit!

As you read through the New Testament from now on, please take note of verses that appear to come down on one side or the other of the eternal security debate. Simply ask yourself what kind of faith the verse is talking about.

Quitters never win!

Preserving faith never quits!

*Now unto him that is able to keep
you from falling, and to present you*

*faultless before the presence of his
glory with exceeding joy, to the only
wise God our Savior, be glory and
majesty, dominion and power, both
now and for ever. Amen.*

Jude 1:24,25 (KJV)

All Scriptures are taken from the New
American Standard Bible unless otherwise
marked.

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