

Clarifying What Must Be Believed for Salvation: Wilkin in *Grace in Focus*: One's Saving Faith in Christ Includes Confidence in Eternal Security

- 11) Salvation is contingent upon an individual placing his personal faith in Christ. But the Greek noun for faith, *pistis*, and the verb form, *pisteuō*, are both transitive and require an object. The object is Christ. But that are certain things that one must believe about Christ. It must be accepted with confidence that He is both undiminished deity and true humanity in one Person forever.
- 12) Further, one must believe with absolute confidence that his sins were judged in Christ on the cross. This judgment included his every sin past, present, and future. Their judgment has been removed from him and imposed on Christ.
- 13) Having confidence in this doctrine the individual must then have absolute confidence that his sins are no longer an issue. He has been set free from the power of his sinful nature and enslaved to God:

Romans 6:22 - Having been freed from the tyranny of the sinful nature and having become slaves to God, you are having your benefit in the form of experiential sanctification, and the outcome of eternal life.

- 14) Since sin is no longer an issue, the new believer is secure in the knowledge he has eternal life and will go to heaven when he dies. This confidence sustains his confidence in God and the veracity of His Word. He is now free to grow in grace in order to serve God by learning and applying His plan to life and circumstances.
- 15) Therefore, in order to be saved a person's faith in Christ must result in absolute confidence that the following things are true and irrevocable: (1) that his soul is delivered from eternal damnation in the lake of fire, (2) that instead he now possesses eternal life, (3) that he will go to heaven when he dies, and (4) that he is guaranteed a resurrection body just like the Lord's.
- 16) And excellent article on this subject appears in the current issue of the Grace Evangelical Society's newsletter:

Wilkin, Robert N. "Practical Objections to the Necessity of Belief in Eternal Security," *Grace in Focus*, March/April 2006, 1, 3:

The issue of when eternal life starts came to the forefront in our annual conference this year (Feb 27-Mar 2, 2006). Both Zane Hodges and Bob Bryant said that if a person has never been sure he is eternally secure by faith in Jesus, then he has not yet been born again. Yet an informal survey of the conferees revealed that somewhere between one-third and one-half disagreed with this view.

I heard two practical objections to the idea that assurance is of the essence of saving faith. These are objections that hit at the heart of this issue.

I Personally Was Born Again before I Believed I Was Eternally Secure.

Up to half of this year's conferees indicated that they personally were born again before they believed they were eternally secure. If this is true, they obviously consider belief in eternal security to be a sanctification issue.

My response is that this answer begs the question. How does anyone know when he or she was born again? There is no feeling that infallibly proves the moment of the new birth. Nor are there behavioral changes that prove a person is regenerate. We all know Mormons and Buddhists and Hindus and even atheists who are very moral and happy people. And we all know depressed and carnally-minded born-again people.

The only way anyone knows the time of his new birth is if he knows what a person must believe in order to be born again. This is the heart of the Free Grace position. We do not base assurance on feeling or on lifestyle. We base assurance on faith in the saving message. (p. 1)

Jesus promises everlasting life to all who simply believe in Him for it (John 3:16; 4:13-14; 5:24; 6:47; 11:25-27). He doesn't promise provisional life. As Dr. (Charles) Ryrie likes to say, "If everlasting life could be lost, it has the wrong name." Thus if a person does not believe he has *everlasting* life, if he instead believes he can lose everlasting life—or if he believes that he can prove he never really had it in the first place, as Reformed Lordship Salvation people believe, then he doesn't believe the saving message now. And if he has never believed it, then he has not yet been born again. (pp. 1, 3)

Consider this syllogism:

Major premise: Bob believes that he has everlasting life now, but that he can lose it by committing a major sin.

Minor premise: Bob does not believe that Jesus promises everlasting life to all who simply believe in Him.

Conclusion: Bob does not believe the saving message.

A person who has never been sure he is eternally secure by faith alone in Christ alone has not yet believed the saving message. And there is no other way to be born again except by believing the saving message.

A person cannot believe his eternal destiny is in doubt and yet at the same time believe the saving message. The saving message is a message of certainty, not doubt (e.g., John 11:25-27).

John 11:25 - Jesus said to (Martha), "I am the resurrection and the life [eternal life]; he who believes in Me will live [eternally] even if he dies [physically],

v. 26 - and everyone who lives [physically] and believes in Me will never die [eternally]. Do you believe this?"

v. 27 - (Martha) said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world."

The second objection is similar to the first:

I Know Many Christians Who've Died but Never Believed They Were Eternally Secure.

Once again, this is begging the question. How do we know if another person was born again? We can't tell by their works, their joy, their professed love for Jesus, how sincerely they sing, or anything of the kind. Mormons and Catholics and orthodox and multitudes of people who have never believed the saving message nonetheless love Jesus, sing with conviction, read their Bibles, picket abortion clinics, pray, etc.

It is doctrine, not practice, that shows us who our spiritual brothers and sisters are. We ask, "If you were to die and stand before God, and He were to ask you, 'Why should I let you into My kingdom?' what would you say?"

Let's say a person said, as a good legalist would, "Well, You should let me into Your kingdom because I'm trying hard to live a good life and my good works do outweigh my bad works." Would you conclude they believe or do not believe the saving message? That person does not believe (it).

Yet some would say that a person who has always believed like that is born again and we know they are because of observing their lives. That doesn't make sense. We don't know who is born again by observing their lives. It is about what they believe.

Say you came to faith out of Roman Catholicism. Using this same logic you might say, "I know many Roman Catholics who were born again and have died, but yet who never were sure they were eternally secure. Thus I know eternal security is a side issue and not an essential element of the saving message."

Of course, if belief in eternal security is not an essential element of the saving message, then Catholics who believe in justification by faith plus works are indeed born again. The question is, is eternal security a side issue?

The only way these practical concerns could overthrow assurance being of the essence of saving faith would be if the Bible taught that you can identify Christians by their works, their joy, their emotions, their looks, etc. But the Bible doesn't teach that. Indeed, it teaches just the opposite.

The Bible teaches that believers can live "like mere men" (1 Cor 3:3), or even worse than the unsaved live (1 Cor 5:1). The Bible teaches that believers can be downhearted and discouraged.

We let the Scriptures interpret our experience. We do not interpret the Scriptures based on our experience. The Scriptures are the source of our beliefs. (p. 3)

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- 17) And Scripture is clear that faith in Christ results in eternal life. If you do not believe you have eternal life, what exactly was the result of your faith in Christ? Further, what purpose did the Lord's sacrifice on the cross have? Are salvation and eternal life unrelated?