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YPS

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Assurance of Salvation

Countless numbers of Christians down through the millennia of time have struggled with doubt. 'Am I really saved?' they ask. 'Is it possible for us to be completely sure that God has saved us?' 'How can I be sure of my salvation?' Some have been so uncertain that they have asked the Lord to save them over and over again.

Doubt is something with which many Christians, though not all, struggle. It is uncomfortable sitting on a stool, or chair that has broken or wobbly legs.

The chair of assurance of salvation, like all good chairs, has four legs. Let's check to see if they are safe.

Leg number 1: what God has done for me.

Despite the hopes of millions of people around the world today the prospect of any one getting to heaven to be with God in the next life

is not dependent upon anything he or she does. Many live their lives hoping that God will see the good they do and reward it with a place in heaven. They have the forlorn hope that the good they do will outweigh the bad they have done, though many refuse even to acknowledge they have done anything wrong. Yet the Bible's teaching is absolutely clear: 'there is none that is righteous, no not one', Rom. 3. 10; 'all have sinned and come short of the glory of God', Rom. 3. 23; 'the wages of sin is death', Rom. 6. 23; 'it is appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgment', Heb. 9. 27; God 'hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man



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whom he hath ordained'; Acts. 17. 31; that when the Lord Jesus returns He shall take 'vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,' 2 Thess. 1. 8; and that they will be 'punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,' 2 Thess. 1. 9.

It is God's wrath and anger upon sin and sinners that is man's clear and present danger, John 3. 36. No matter how much good a man or woman may do, the wrong that we have done cannot be cancelled out by the good that we have done. To make it clear to our benighted and stubborn minds, God says categorically that getting right with Him is 'not of works lest any man should boast,' Eph. 2. 9. No matter what sort of life a person may lead, whether that is a life of huge wickedness or a life of seeming goodness, God's forgiveness of any sin a person has

done is absolutely dependent upon His grace. 'By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God,' Eph. 2. 8. We need, then, to be saved from the wrath to come and we are totally dependent upon God's grace to save us.

How and why should God save us from His just

wrath on sin? Sin has to be punished. So God sent His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die on a Roman gibbet at Calvary. What men did to Him at the cross was terrible enough; but what God did to His own Son was worse. Christ died on the cross as a substitute for sinners, and as such was punished by God. Peter, writing to believers, reminded them that, though Christ 'did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth,' He in 'his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree,' 1 Pet. 2. 22-24. Isaiah says, 'the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,' Isa. 53. 6. On that cross 'it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief' and there God made His soul 'an offering for sin,' Isa. 53. 10. So Christ 'once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God,' 1 Pet. 3. 18. On the cross the Lord Jesus became a substitute for sinners who place their faith in Him, bearing sin not His own and being judged for that sin and forsaken by God for that sin. This was the great work of atonement that He had been sent to do and when He died, He was able to cry with a loud voice, 'Finished!' God was so pleased with what His Son had done that He raised Him from the dead and the Lord Jesus, 'after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God,' Heb. 10. 12. Now 'the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God,' can, and does cleanse us from all sin, Heb. 9. 14; 1 John 1. 7.

This is the basis upon which we can be saved from God's wrath. Because the Lord Jesus died as a substitute for



The first leg of the stool is firmly in place. The Lord Jesus has done enough for God to forgive sin.

sinners who place their faith in Him and bore God's wrath and judgement for them, so all who believe in Him can know that their sins have been judged by God and punished by Him. God's wrath upon them has been atoned by the death of another, His Son. God will not, and cannot, judge believers again for their sin. 'Payment God will not twice demand, first at my bleeding Surety's hand and then again at mine'. The first leg of the stool is firmly in place. The Lord Jesus has done enough for God to forgive sin.

Leg number 2: what God has done *in me*.

God now commands 'all men everywhere to repent', Acts 17. 30. This was the message of the first Christian preachers. 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins', Acts 2. 38. 'Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out', Acts 3. 19. The gist of the message was 'repentance towards God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ,' Acts 20. 21. The sinner's problem is this, that in his natural, sinful, state, he does not recognise he is a sinner, does not recognise his need to be saved from God's wrath and therefore does not see the need to repent. 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned', 1 Cor. 2. 14. God has to do, first of all, a work of *illumination* in the sinner. It is the task of the Spirit of God to convict the world of sin, of righteousness and of

judgement, John 16. 8. To know God's truth we need an anointing from the Holy One, 1 John 2.

20. When the Holy Spirit has shown us our need of a Saviour, and shown us the only Saviour we can ever have, He does a work of *invitation* in the heart of a sinner. 'God hath, from the beginning, chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth whereunto he hath called you by our gospel', 2 Thess. 2. 13-14. It is this inward 'calling' (Rom. 1. 6-7; Rom. 8. 28, 30; 1 Cor. 1. 24-26; Eph. 4. 1, 4) that is in view when the Lord says, 'No man can come to me unless the Father, which hath sent me, draw him', John 6. 44; and He also says there, 'him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out', v. 37. Then, as the sinner sees his need of a Saviour, and is called through the gospel to believe and repent of his sins, he believes and God does a work of *conversion* in his heart, though the devil has done his best to prevent it from happening, John 12. 40. All these things, which stem from God's work of *regeneration*, lead on to *justification*, *salvation*, *adoption* and a life of *sanctification* in living for God.

These are the things God does in, or even to, the sinner. If you and I can look into our hearts and lives and see that a work of God similar to the above has been done in us, we have cause to believe that the second leg of the stool is secure. It is God who has 'begun a good work in you' if these things are true.

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Leg number 3: what I have *professed* about that.

So God has done something for me and I believe he has done something in me and to me. How do I seal that work? By my belief in it, and acceptance of it, yes, but also by my confession, or profession, of it. If a sinner has been truly saved, he or she must tell others about that. So the word of God tells me, 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation,' Rom. 10. 9-10. The Lord Himself tells us that 'whosoever shall confess me before men him shall the Son of man confess before the angels of God,' Luke 12. 8. Yet even this public *profession* of faith, or conversion, can only be done with the help of the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 12. 3. Such a

profession of faith is best shown by baptism. Standing for the Lord publicly confirms the work of God in the sinner's heart. Secret believers are seldom secure ones.

Leg number 4: what I have *proved* about that.

Many Christians have got all three of the above legs secure, but the fourth one wobbles madly. It is one thing to believe Christ died for the ungodly, that God has saved me from judgement and that I have professed this publicly, either by word or by baptism; it is quite another to prove the reality of that profession of mine and the reality of that work of God in my heart. To prove this, to get full assurance of faith, I must live a life of discipleship and obedience to God. A disobedient Christian will have very little assurance of salvation in his life: a backsliding Christian will have even less. 'Make your calling and election sure' is the clear instruction of God to the believer, 2 Pet. 1. 10. Those who doubted their salvation in New Testament times were given a series of tests by which they could see whether they were truly the Lord's. These tests included keeping His commandments, (being obedient, in other words) 1 John 2. 3, walking with Him, 2. 5, not habitually sinning, 1 John 3. 9, loving other Christians, 3. 14, believing that Jesus is the Son of God, 5. 1, and overcoming the world, 5. 5. It is true that God does His part and the believer is kept (preserved) in Jesus Christ. But the same writer in the same passage also tells us we have to do our part, too. We have to 'keep ourselves in the love of God,' Jude 21. Perhaps we would all have



more assurance of faith if we had more proof of it in our lives from day to day.

Assurance of salvation is a subjective thing. Many will tell us that we must rest on what God has done and never doubt our salvation. This is true. But if we are not walking with the Lord, if we are not being obedient Christians, if we live like un-believers, then we have no right to assume God has done anything in us. If leg four wobbles, it won't be long before leg three does, and then we should wonder whether leg two is secure. Though the believer can rest in the assurance that 'he [God] which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ', Phil. 1. 6, yet he or she must still 'work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure', Phil. 2. 12-13. Yes we should rest in the finished work of Christ on the cross. Yes, we should believe and be converted to God. Yes we should make public profession of our faith. But unless we obey God and live lives that please Him, our profession of faith in Christ may prove to be empty and false. It is by our fruits that we are ultimately known. We are to 'walk worthy of the calling' by which we have been called. Disobedient, worldly, unholy, reluctant believers seldom feel secure in their faith, and with good reason. I have no right to say I am one of God's children if I do not look, sound or live like one.

If we are not walking with the Lord, if we are not being obedient Christians, if we live like un-believers, then we have no right to assume God has done anything in us

The truth is that, though we are justified by faith alone, the faith that justifies is never alone. It produces moral fruit; it expresses itself 'through love' (Gal. 5. 6); it transforms one's way of living; it begets virtue. J. I. Packer

BY IAN REES

Building Blocks of the Chr

It's in us all – the principle of Orig

Definition of Topic

Definition 1

the tendency to evil of all human beings, held to be a consequence of the Fall. (*Oxford English Dictionary*)

Definition 2

Original sin is said to result from the Fall of Man, when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit of a particular tree in the Garden of Eden. This first sin ("the original sin"), an action of the first human beings, is traditionally understood to be the cause of "original sin", the fallen state from which human beings can be saved only by God's grace. (*Wikipedia.org*)

Key Bible References

Romans 5.12, Romans 3.23, Psalm 51.5, Jeremiah 17.9, Mark 7.20, 1 Corinthians 15.22

Detailed Teaching

'No one's perfect', 'we all make mistakes', 'we are only human' – all of these expressions are used by most of us at some point. Essentially they are not used to excuse our actions but as an admission that we really cannot help getting things wrong or saying wrong things as it is part of our nature to do so.

In biblical terms these statements define the concept of 'original sin'. That is, there is in every one of us a tendency to do what is wrong. If you have ever played carpet bowls you will know that the balls all have a bias and that they will never go in a straight line without your skill being involved. We all have a bias towards wrongdoing which is as a result of original sin. Let's look at a few bible references together to see why this is the case.

Romans 5.12 – 'by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned'. This verse states that God holds Adam responsible for bringing sin into our world (see Gen.3.6). It clarifies that death is the outcome of sin (Ezek. 18.4, Rom.6.23, James 1.15). The obvious fact that there is a 100% death rate is seen here and the reason is given, Adam sinned and as a result all sinned. The principle of sin is resident in every human being. On a personal level this explains our

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Original Sin

personal tendencies and the habits that we know are wrong and make us feel guilty. At a world level original sin explains issues such as genocide, war, cruelty, exploitation, abuse and the universal nature of evil as recorded in history.

Romans 3.23 – ‘all have sinned and come short of the glory of God’. This verse is found in the middle of a detailed explanation of the guilt of mankind and the salvation that has been provided, legally, by the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul, the inspired writer, teaches that ‘the whole world is guilty before God’, v 19. How can he be so sure that everyone is guilty as in his lifetime he will only have come across a limited number of people? Is he taking a wild guess or depending on God’s revelation that all of mankind stand legally guilty before Him? The passage clearly indicates the final statement to be true.

The other verses which have been noted under ‘Key Bible References’ all add to the biblical position that we were born sinners as a result of what Adam did. The Lord Jesus teaches in Mark 7 that the things that come out of us defile us (i.e. we are morally unclean and the evidence is seen in what we say and do). The ancient prophet Jeremiah cried ‘the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked’. In fact, he says we cannot even work what we are really like we are so poisoned in our hearts and minds. Paul comes back to



the subject in 1. Corinthians 15 when he states we all died in Adam and finally the Psalmist, when confessing his sin in Psalm 51, clearly states that sin was in his character even at conception.

Conclusion

Thankfully a true understanding of this fact should not result in despair but in thankfulness that ‘the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world’. All have indeed sinned but a world of sinners has been given in Christ, the offer of great salvation.

BY STEPHEN BAKER



Fools in Fellowship

Recognizing, but not being, fools.

The Gullibles



BY IAN REES

Meet **Master Naïve**. He and his sister are easily led, believe everything they hear and don't see the need to consider things, to evaluate them, before they accept them. They are often called 'the simple' in the Bible, not because they lack brain power but because they are 'void of understanding', Prov. 7. 7. In a classic description of seduction, Master Naïve is being tempted to compromise morally. His temptress knows and exploits his weaknesses. She knows he is easily flattered and responds to subtle words, and so persuades him to do what is obviously wrong. He goes after her, as an ox (we would say a lamb) to the slaughter, Prov. 7. 7-23, totally oblivious of the consequences he will have to face. The teaching of Proverbs 7 is to warn us all not to be like him, but to be wise and discerning.

But the Naïves are easily caught. Whereas a wise man would be troubled at something that was obviously wrong, and would smell a rat and avoid trouble, Master Naïve yields easily to the thought that 'stolen waters are sweet', 9. 17. He believes every word, whereas the prudent are more discerning, Prov. 14. 15. Master Prudent, you see, has the foresight to see the pitfalls that lie ahead, evaluates the consequences of his actions, whereas Master Naïve just goes blithely on his way without any thought at all and gets himself into trouble, 22. 3. He is too easy-going; he is happy just to drift along without exercising his brain too much. He would rather be lazy and keep the wrong company than work hard but be a loner, a Billy No-mates, Prov. 12. 11. His tragedy is that he doesn't even notice that the company he keeps is vain and is leading him astray. He is the sort who hears advice, but

would rather turn away from it than follow it, Prov. 1. 32. His philosophy in life seems to be, 'Judge not that ye be not judged'. He therefore refuses to evaluate any advice given, or any teaching he hears and is wide open to exploitation. We are encouraged, instead, to make sure that we are not 'tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive,' Eph 4. 14. We are encouraged to 'test the spirits,' to evaluate what people say and that we should judge, not in a critical way but in a discerning way, what we are taught.

There is hope for the Naïves. In many ways they are the most loveable of the fools in Scripture, but they are still foolish. Perhaps because they are not proud and consciously rebellious, the Lord 'preserveth the simple', Ps. 116. 6. And they can learn from other people's experiences. 'Smite a scorner and the simple will beware,' says Proverbs 19 verse 25. Yet it is mainly through giving attention to the Word of God that Master Naïve can be saved from his folly. The 'testimony of the law is sure, making wise the simple', Ps. 19. 7; the entrance of God's word shines light on our lives and 'giveth understanding to the simple', Ps. 119. 130.

Are you a bit naïve, easily led, gullible? Don't be. Listen to God's wisdom today that cries out to us, 'How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity', Prov. 1. 22. Read God's word; listen to advice; evaluate what you hear; think about the consequences of what you do. And don't keep company with fools.

