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You Are Not Alone

Has there ever been a time in your life, whether long or brief, when you had a struggle—a question in your mind—about the assurance of your salvation? I have often asked this question when preaching to adults in independent Baptist churches. Almost without fail, the majority of those in attendance indicate they have struggled with this issue. I never cease to be amazed at the relief people seem to feel when they know they are not alone and can get some concrete Bible help.

As I was preaching on this subject to an audience of teenagers at camp, I noticed a young lady with tears rolling down her cheeks. I assumed the message had dealt with a need in her life. In fact, she offered afterward, she had just gotten the

assurance of her salvation settled a couple of weeks before. She was crying because she realized that she was not alone in the difficulty she had faced.

On another occasion, I recall preaching in a small church in the West. I believe there were fewer than thirty adults in attendance. Though there were not many people there, the folks were well-versed in the Bible. Several had been to Bible college. Almost all of them had grown up in Christian homes. At the invitation, seven of those adults—approximately twenty-five percent—indicated that they had claimed assurance that morning based on the passages of Scripture we had examined.

My own testimony involves a struggle with this issue as well. Being raised in a Christian home, I heard the gospel at an early age. When I was just a little child, I realized my need for a Savior and trusted Jesus Christ to be that Savior. Some time later, I began to have doubts about whether or not I was really saved. I cannot say that I thought about it every waking moment. Rather, the questions flooded my mind in waves. When those waves came, life was terrible. You see, in my situation, I had trouble recalling many of the exact details surrounding my conversion experience. I could not provide you a date of when I had been saved. I knew it was around Easter, so I assumed it was April of the year. I remembered so few of the details that I honestly could more vividly remember times of remembering

my salvation experience than I could remember the salvation experience itself.

When I considered these circumstances still as I child, I thought one thing for sure—that my doubting must be very unusual. I was wrong.

I should pause to say that I do not believe every Christian goes through a time of doubt, but many do. I thank the Lord that when I was still a child, there came a day when I settled it. Unfortunately, a new set of questions arose like, “Which time was I saved?” and “Is it ok that I went through this?” Approximately seven or eight years after I gained the assurance of my salvation, I finally got my questions answered. I am glad I did, but I am sorry it took so long.

In the process of clearing up the questions in my mind, one passage of Scripture became dearer to me than any other. It is special to me because it shows me that even in the first century after Christ walked this earth, people struggled with this issue. It is even dearer to me because it unfolds the most important truths for answering the questions I had.

The passage? I John 5:11-13.

And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things

have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

Isn't that interesting? The first part of the thirteenth verse indicates that the apostle John is writing to people that "*believe on the name of the Son of God.*" The Bible is clear that if a person believes on the name of the Son of God, he is saved.

But as many as received him [Jesus Christ], to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. John 1:12

Clearly, John was writing to Christians in I John. Because they had believed in Jesus Christ, their sins were forgiven; they were on their way to heaven.

So he says, "I am writing unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God." He explains his purpose in writing: "*That ye may know that ye have eternal life.*" This purpose indicates that it is possible for a person who has believed to still be unsure he has eternal life.

This passage is even better evidence than our anecdotal evidence previously mentioned because this is the inspired Word of God! We understand by experience that Christians can doubt their salvation. But even more importantly, we see the Bible teaching that this is a legitimate reality.

That is important, because some people will say, “Hey, if you have doubts about your salvation, then you must not really be saved.” That thinking is not supported by the book of I John, nor will that thinking allow any of us to really help someone struggling with this issue either. John wrote to people that had trusted Christ—they had “*believed on the name of the Son of God*”—but they did not know they were saved. It is possible to be saved and not have the assurance of it.

Though lack of assurance is a legitimate reality, it is not a good position to be in. Getting this matter settled is extremely important because it is very difficult to move on in the Christian life with a mind full of doubts. It is difficult to *grow* in our relationship with the Lord when we are not sure we *have* a relationship with the Lord.

The good news is that John does not leave us wondering what the solution might be. It is comforting to know that others, centuries ago, dealt with this issue too. Even *more* comforting is the fact that they received answers to their questions... which are answers to my questions...and yours too.

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The Key Issue

What would happen to a person who had trusted Christ to be his Savior but who died lacking the assurance of that salvation? Would that person go to heaven? Without reservation, I say, “Absolutely! He will go to heaven.” “But,” you say, “He didn’t know for sure he was saved!”

I can see why this scenario would be confusing, but I am thankful that to God there is no confusion. I am completely aware of the fact that I am not God; I cannot see the heart. But if you are speaking of a person who has believed yet lacks assurance, his **salvation** is not in question; his **confidence** is.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

and this Ministry

Evangelist Troy Carlson serves as the director of West Branch—a ministry of the Bill Rice Ranch—in Williams, Arizona. Troy and Sara, along with their two children, Abby and Nathan, spend their lives in revival work: in camps, in conferences, and in local church meetings. Brother Troy has a special desire to help people have confidence in their own salvation because of the way the Lord has worked in his own life.

The Ranch was started over fifty years ago by Evangelist Bill Rice and his wife Cathy as a way to reach the Deaf with the message of salvation. The Ranch now holds week-long sessions all summer in three separate programs—Deaf, Junior, and Teen. These programs run simultaneously, allowing

churches to bring young people from all three groups while only making one trip. The Ranch also conducts family camps and special seasonal events each year.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

about the Bill Rice Ranch or West Branch,

please call 615-893-2767,

write to the Bill Rice Ranch,

627 Bill Rice Ranch Rd., Murfreesboro, TN 37128,

or visit the website at www.billriceranch.org.