

26 QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD BE ASKING!

QUESTION #18: WILL I MAKE IT?

Q. Will I make it as a Christian? Will God keep me, no matter what? Will I always *feel* like I'll make it?

A. Those who are truly born again will be kept by God's power and will persevere as Christians until the end of their lives; only those who persevere until the end have been truly born again. Christians *will* experience assurance, but in varying degrees.

1. THE DOCTRINE OF PRESERVATION

Those who are truly born again will be kept by the power of the Triune God.

A. THE FATHER'S WILL AND THE SON'S DOING

(TRUTH)

John 6³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.⁴⁰ For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day."

John 10²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never [certainly not!] perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand.²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. (See also, Rom 8:29-30, 38-39.)

B. THE HOLY SPIRIT'S JOB

(HUMILITY)

Eph 1¹³ In [Jesus] you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,¹⁴ who is the guarantee (down payment) of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of [the Father's] glory.

2Cor 1²¹ And it is God (the Father) who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us,²² and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee (down payment). (See also, 1 Pet 1.3-5.)

2. THE DOCTRINE OF PERSEVERANCE

Those who are truly Christians will persevere until the end of their lives. On the one hand (as above), Scripture views salvation as completed finally and fully by God, yet on the other hand, Christians are exhorted in Scriptures to keep themselves in the faith!

Phil 2¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Heb 12¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,² looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (See also 2 Tim 4.7-8; Jude 17-23.)

3. FALLING FROM GRACE?

Only those who persevere until the end have been truly saved. This is what Jesus (Matt 13.1-9; Jn 15.1-7) and the apostles believed.

Col 1 ²¹ And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²² he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, ²³ if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard...

1John 2 ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us. (See also, 2 Cor 11.15, 26; Gal 2.4.)

4. WILL I ALWAYS FEEL CERTAIN I'M A CHRISTIAN?

Those who are truly born again will experience assurance of salvation, but in varying degrees throughout their Christian lives.

A. SOME FEEL ASSURANCE WHO SHOULDN'T

(TRUTH)

Matt 7 ²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' ²³ And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'

B. CHRISTIANS SHOULD FEEL ASSURANCE... BUT SOMETIMES DON'T

(HUMILITY)

Rom 8 ¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs— heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

1John 4 ¹³ By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.

Sometimes because of sin or neglect of the means of grace we lose our assurance. Other times we don't feel assurance simply because God has removed the 'light of his countenance' for reasons only he knows. The normative experience, however, for a Christian trusting in Christ and growing in grace is to have assurance in some sense.

C. MEANS OF ATTAINING ASSURANCE

1. Do I have a present trust in Jesus for salvation?
2. Is there evidence of the Lord's saving work in my life?
 - The fruit of the Spirit – Gal 5.22-23
 - Positive influence on my church – Matt 7.16
 - Rejoicing in sound doctrine – 1 John 2.23-24
3. Do I see a long term pattern of overall growth in my Christian life?
 - Continuing vital relationship with Jesus – John 15
 - Love for fellow Christians – 1 John 2.10; Jas 2:17-18
 - Obedience to God's Word – 1 John 2:4-6

5. APPLICATION

A. TRUTH

You must not trust your feelings or your past experiences to know whether you are saved. Are you trusting Christ now? Are you repenting now? Are you pursuing him using his appointed means of grace now?

B. HUMILITY

Even after being saved by God by faith and not works (nothing to do with us), we must yet be guarded by him (1 Pet 1.3-5).

C. FREEDOM

We have been freed from the sins of fear, worry, and anxiety. The work that he began is a work that he will complete (Phil 1.6). None can steal us from the Good Shepherd's care.

D. DELIGHT

The Triune God, three persons with one holy purpose, has loved me and purposes to keep me. I will endure because he will keep me.