

BELIEF AND UNBELIEF IT'S AS SIMPLE AS 1, 2, 3

This sermon serves as one approach to dealing with the false doctrine of “once saved, always saved.”

THE DEADLY DOCTRINE DECLARED

The Westminster Confession of Faith:

- a. “They whom God hath accepted in His beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.”

THE DEADLY DOCTRINE DENUDED

Sam Morris, former Pastor of the First Baptist Church, Stamford, Texas:

- a. “We take the position that a Christian’s sins do not damn his soul. The way a Christian lives, what he says, his character, his conduct, or his attitude toward other people have nothing whatever to do with the salvation of his soul.”
- b. “All the prayers a man may pray, all the Bible he may read, all the churches he may belong to, all the services he may attend, all the sermons he may practice, all the debts he may pay, all the laws he may keep, all the ordinances he may observe, all the benevolent acts he may perform will not make his soul one whit safer; and all the sins he may commit, from idolatry to murder, will not make his soul in any more danger. The way a man lives has nothing what ever to do with the salvation of his soul.”

UNBELIEF

1. Unbelievers will be lost.

Heb 3:12 – “Beware, **brethren**, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of **unbelief in departing from the living God; . . .**”

Mk 16:15-16 – “And He said to them, “Go into all the world and **preach the gospel** to every creature. 16 He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but **he who does not believe will be condemned.**”

Jn 3:18 – “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but **he who does not believe (in Him) is condemned** already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”

2 Cor 4:3-4 – “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to **those who are perishing**, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, **who do not believe**, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of

God, should shine on them.”

2 Th 2:11-12 – “And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, 12 **that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth** but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

Jude 5 -- "But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward **destroyed those who did not believe.**"

Rom 11:20 -- "Well said. **Because of unbelief they were broken off**, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear."

2. But, an unbeliever can become a believer.

1 Tim 1:12-16 -- "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, 13 although I was **formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor** (see Ac 9:4), and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because **I did it ignorantly in unbelief.** 14 And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. 15 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. 16 However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to **believe on Him for everlasting life.**"

- a. 2 Tim 1:12 -- "For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for **I know whom I have believed** and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.

3. If an unbeliever becomes a believer he will be saved.

Rom 11:23 -- "And they also, **if they do not continue in unbelief**, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again."

Ezek 18:21-22 -- "But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. 22 None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live."

BELIEF

1. Believers will be saved.

Note: When I say that “believers” will be saved I am using the word “belief” or “faith” in its broad, comprehensive sense that includes obedience to the will of God – it is this “faith” that saves, not the “faith” of the Jews of **Jn 12:42** who would not confess Him or the “faith” of the demons of **Jas 2:19**

who live in rebellion to His will.

- a. *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* is helpful in giving us an accurate understanding of the word "faith" as it used by Paul in Romans chapters three and four, and other contexts where the doctrine of justification through faith is set forth: "*the main elements in "faith" (pistis) in its relation to the invisible God, as distinct from "faith" in man, are especially brought out in the use of this noun and the corresponding verb, pisteuo; they are (1) a firm conviction, producing a full acknowledgement of God's revelation or truth, e.g., 2 Thess 2:11-12; (2) a personal surrender to Him, John 1:12; (3) a conduct inspired by such surrender, 2 Cor 5:7. Prominence is given to one or the other of these elements according to the context*" (p. 222).
- b. Thayer's treatment of saving "faith" is consistent with Vine's: "*used especially of the faith by which a man embraces Jesus, i.e. a conviction, full of joyful trust, that Jesus is the Messiah – the divinely appointed author of eternal salvation in the kingdom of God, conjoined with obedience to Christ*" (p. 511).

So, with that understanding, I say again: "Believers will be saved."

Jn 1:12 -- "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become **children of God**, to those who **believe in His name**: . . ."

Jn 3:16 -- "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever **believes in Him** should **not perish** but **have everlasting life**."

Jn 3:36 -- "He who **believes in the Son** has **everlasting life**; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Jn 5:24 -- "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and **believes in Him who sent Me** has **everlasting life**, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."

Jn 6:47 -- "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who **believes in Me** has **everlasting life**."

1 Jn 5:13 -- "These things I have written to you who **believe** in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have **eternal life**, and that you may **continue** to believe in the name of the Son of God."

Ac 13:39 -- ". . . and by Him everyone who **believes** is **justified** from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses."

2. But, a believer can become an unbeliever.

Lk 8:11-13 -- "Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. 12 Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes

away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. 13 But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, **who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.**"

Heb 3:12-15 -- "Beware, **brethren**, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of **unbelief in departing from the living God**; 13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," **lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.** 14 For we have become partakers of Christ **if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, . . .**"

3. If a believer becomes an unbeliever he will be lost.

Rom 11:22 -- "Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, **if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise (if you do not continue in His goodness, bw) you also will be cut off.**"

Ezek 18:24 -- "But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done shall not be remembered; because of the unfaithfulness of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them he shall die."

False doctrine: "Nothing a Christian does puts his soul in any danger."

- a. The Westminster Confession of Faith:
 - ▶ "They whom God hath accepted in His beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved."
- b. Sam Morris, former Pastor of the First Baptist Church, Stamford, Texas:
 - ▶ "We take the position that a Christian's sins do not damn his soul. The way a Christian lives, what he says, his character, his conduct, or his attitude toward other people have nothing whatever to do with the salvation of his soul."
 - ▶ "All the prayers a man may pray, all the Bible he may read, all the churches he may belong to, all the services he may attend, all the sermons he may practice, all the debts he may pay, all the laws he may keep, all the ordinances he may observe, all the benevolent acts he may perform will not make his soul one whit safer; and all the sins he may commit, from idolatry to murder, will not make his soul in any more danger. The way a man lives has nothing what ever to do with the salvation of his soul."

True doctrine: "A Christian's salvation is conditional."

- a. The apostle Paul: "**And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and**

irreproachable in His sight -- **if** indeed you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard. . .” -- Col 1:21-23.

- b. The apostle Paul: “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, **for in doing this** you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” (1 Tim 4:16)
- c. The apostle Peter: “Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for **if** you do these things you will never stumble; 11 for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Pet 1:10-11)

Conclusion

Some members of the church say that a Christian must be faithful unto death to receive the crown of life (as does Jesus in Rev 2:10), but. . .

- a. They live however they want to
- b. They go where they want to go
- c. They do what they want to do
- d. They say what they want to say
- e. They act like they have some special exemption from God

But listen to the Lord’s apostle:

- a. Rom 6:1-6 – “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? 2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? 3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? 4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness of His* resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”
- b. Rom 6:17-18 – “But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. 18 And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

Who is the worst offender?

- a. The one who says a Christian’s sins do not endanger his soul?
- b. Or, the one who says a Christian’s sins do endanger his soul, but behaves as though he doesn’t mean a word of it?