“How Strong Does My Belief Need to be for Me to be Saved?”

This may seem like a strange question, but how strong does my belief need to be in order for me to be saved? I have been living I guess what you would call a carnal life (not praying or even thinking about God) for around 20 years and am beginning to wonder if I have lost my salvation or if I cannot be reconciled. Please help me, something is missing. I am worried that some of the feelings I sometimes have mean that I don’t want to serve The Lord.

If you have faith as small as a mustard seed you can be saved (Matt. 17:20). The issue really is not so much the “size” or “amount” of your faith, but the object of your faith. Are you trusting Christ for salvation? If so, then you are saved, for your faith is placed in the only One who is really able to save you.

Now I must say that it’s really not surprising that you don’t feel like you have much of a relationship with the Lord, for the fact is that (by your own admission) you don’t. If, for the past twenty years or so, you haven’t been seeking the Lord in prayer, spending time in His word, enjoying fellowship with other believers, seeking to serve the Lord in your own sphere of influence, etc., then it’s really not surprising that you would feel distant from Him. The truth is, at this point in your life, you *are* distant from Him! It would as if you had a friend that you had not spoken to or thought about in twenty years. What sort of friendship would that be? Not a very close one, right?

The good news, however, is that you can always repent, turn away from sin and turn back to God, and let Him know that you

would like to begin to have a “real” relationship with Him. If you have truly trusted Christ for salvation, then your relationship with God is still intact. However, you’ve been out of fellowship with Him for the last twenty years. You scarcely even know the One you’re trusting with your eternal destiny! Nevertheless, if you confess your sins, the Lord is faithful and just to forgive your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). So I would encourage you to go to the Lord in prayer, confess your sins, accept His forgiveness and cleansing, and get back in the game! You might want to read the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32. I think you would find this story helpful at this point in your life.

A couple of helpful tips:

1. Begin spending some time each day with God both in prayer and reading the Bible (find a good translation that you like and can read without too much difficulty). You may want to begin reading a chapter a day in the Gospel of John.

2. Find a good, conservative, Bible-believing church where you can get involved with other believers in studying the Bible and serving the Lord. If they have small groups for fellowship and Bible study, then get involved in one of those.

May the Lord bless you as you sincerely begin seeking Him again!

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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“What Can We Know about Enoch?”

I did a search on your website on the Book of Enoch and found one of the answers being that it is fiction and made up. How do we know that though? I’m interested in his life, as he was mentioned in the word to have walked with God, which stood out to me among the other men mentioned as having only lived and died. Is there any way I could get info about his life, if indeed the Book of Enoch is a fallacy? Thank you for your time

The book of Enoch is usually referred to as a pseudopigraphical work. That is, it is a book which has been falsely ascribed to the Enoch mentioned in Genesis 5:21-24 and Hebrews 11:5. He is also mentioned as prophesying in Jude 1:14-15—and this section of the work appears to actually go back to Enoch himself.

Nevertheless, there is scholarly consensus that the book of Enoch was written far too late to be attributed to the actual historical Enoch mentioned in Genesis 5. If you would like some more information on this book, there is a reasonably good discussion here: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Enoch. A scholarly discussion of the book can also be found at Google books here.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

Posted July 2011

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“Help Me Understand Biblical Inerrancy?”

A friend of mine with teenage daughters asked me recently if I understood the concept of Biblical inerrancy well enough to explain/justify it for her children. Seems a “pastor” in their local church was attempting to explain the “errors” in the Bible to a group and they were a bit concerned that this leader would indicate the Bible had errors. I was unable to find much on the Probe Web site regarding the inerrancy of the Bible and wondered if you had a document or publication that would cover the topic rather completely yet simply enough for me to understand and to present to these kids. Also, how does the concept of the inspiration of Bible and the inerrancy of the Bibly interplay? It seems to me that if we truly believe the Bible was inspired by God and given to men by the Holy Spirit, it would follow that the Bible in its original autographs would be inerrant.

An excellent resource for a variety of biblical and theological questions is www.bible.org. After reading your letter, I visited their website, typed “inerrancy” in the search engine, and the following resources came up (see bible.org/search/apachesolr_search/inerrancy).

The above link will give you a lot of help with the question of biblical inspiration and inerrancy. Another good resource is *When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties* by Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe (Baker Books, 1992).

You are absolutely correct in observing that the inspiration of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16; etc.) logically entails biblical inerrancy in the original writings. Although inerrancy cannot be extended to the copies, the science and art of textual

criticism has been quite successful in restoring the original text from the thousands of manuscripts available for scholarly study.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

See Also *Probe Answers Our Email*:

- "Why Do the Gospel Accounts Contradict Each Other?"
- "Why Do You Believe the Bible is Inspired and the Qu'ran is Not?"

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"If God is Immaterial, What is He Made Of?"

I got into a debate with an atheist on the existence of God. I used the Cosmological Argument, and then demonstrated how God is timeless, space-less, and immaterial. He countered my conclusion with this question. "If God does not exist inside of time, space, and is not made of material, then in what way does God exist, and what is He made of, nothing?" I don't know how to answer His objection, so I would appreciate it if you could help me out here. I hope that you will e-mail me your advice and direct me to some resources.

Probably the closest relevant biblical description we get of God comes from Jesus in John 4:24, "God is spirit." But God is a personal (or better, tri-personal spirit) characterized by intelligence, will, etc. In this respect, many Christian philosophers prefer to think of God as an unembodied Mind.

In either case, however, the important thing to realize is that God, as you already know, is not a material or physical being. God is spirit; that is, God is an immaterial, or spiritual being. We could also describe God as a spiritual substance. Obviously, this is a long way from saying that God is "nothing"! A spiritual being is not a physical being, but it is every bit as real as a physical being. Indeed, in the case of God, He is actually more "real" than the physical universe (which only exists because He created it and continually sustains it in being).

For some excellent resources on the cosmological argument, please see William Lane Craig's site here: www.reasonablefaith.org/site/PageServer?pagename=scholarly_articles_existence_of_God.

Craig is a top-notch Christian philosopher and is a world-recognized expert on the cosmological argument (as well as other issues).

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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“What’s the Difference Between God’s Will and Man’s Will in Salvation?”

What is the difference between God’s will and man’s will in salvation? When someone chooses to believe in the Lord, do they believe by their own will or by God’s will? The Bible says, “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight…” (Ephesians 1:4).

I think that (in a sense) both wills are involved when someone trusts Christ for salvation. God’s will is primary and the human will is secondary. God desires all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4) and He provides sufficient grace for each person to be saved. Hence, when someone trusts Christ for salvation, they are not doing this on their own initiative or in their own will-power. Rather, they simply quit resisting God’s grace and allow Him to save them. Those who persist in resisting God’s grace will ultimately perish.

Thus, as one Christian theologian has observed, the difference between believers and unbelievers is NOT to be found in the believers; it is to be found in the unbelievers. The believer is one who simply allows God to save him (which is God’s will and desire); the unbeliever is one who continues to resist God’s grace.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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“How Do I Answer the Argument for Satan Because All Positives Have a Negative?”

I was hoping you could help me give an answer to my co-worker. He follows a lot of pagan beliefs. Today he was discussing how the “elite” run the world, and I asked him who he thinks influences the unjust “elite.” He responded, “Satan.” I asked, Do you believe that there is such thing as Satan? and he replied, “Yes, every good thing in the world has a counterpart, hot and cold etc. Therefore since every positive force has a corresponding negative force, a negative ‘spirit’ must exist.”

I was not sure how to respond, other than to say that is not what the Bible teaches, evil is not eternal, and Satan will be overthrown and sent to the lake of fire and tormented forever. I guess he is positing dualism. I wanted to know how I could break down the argument that Satan must exist because “all positives have a negative.” Obviously I agree that satan is real, and I am not disputing his existence; I am disputing the argument he uses to arrive at Satan’s existence.

It seems to me that you are quite right to point out that this is not what the Bible teaches. God is the eternal Creator of all that exists (other than Himself). Hence, there can be God without any Satan, good without any evil, etc. I think your response was right on target.

Not only is this true, but (as something of an aside) it’s also important to remember that God did not originally create the angel who became Satan as an evil being. Rather, Satan fell into sin of his own free will. [Please see my answer to email, “What Caused Lucifer (Satan) to Fall?”]

The principle that every positive must have a negative is therefore simply false. Cold is the absence of heat. And one can certainly conceive of a logically possible "hot" world that no human being would ever regard as "cold." In addition, we must also remember that just because we can conceive of something's opposite, this does not mean (or prove) that the opposite actually exists. One can have heat without cold, light without darkness, love without hatred, etc. None of these REQUIRES an opposite. And for someone to claim that they do would require some sort of argument or proof to that effect—not just an assertion that it is so. After all, we can think of many examples to the contrary. So why should we believe that all positives have a negative?

Finally, according to Occam's razor [Editor's note: "The simplest explanation is often correct"], we must not multiply causes (or entities) beyond necessity. The God of the Bible provides all the explanation we need regarding the origin of the universe, the fine-tuning of the universe, the existence of objective moral values, etc. To posit, in addition to God, an eternal "Satan", is not only unbiblical, it is also completely unnecessary.

At any rate, these are a few of the thoughts that occur to me after reading your letter. I hope this is helpful in talking with your friend.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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“Does One Have to Believe in the Trinity to be Saved?”

Do you have to believe in the Trinity to be saved? I have a friend who is a Oneness Pentecostal who does believe Jesus is God who died for sins and rose from the grave. However, he does not believe in a Triune God. They believe God showed Himself as the Father, then the Son, and now the Holy Spirit.

You ask a very good question. Although the doctrine of the Trinity is a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, I do not personally think that a person needs to have an orthodox understanding of this doctrine in order to be saved. Indeed, when you think about it, many of the people in Christian churches today have an inadequate and unorthodox understanding of this doctrine (but this doesn’t necessarily mean that they aren’t saved).

The Bible is very clear that we are saved by the grace of God through faith in the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Certainly, in order to trust Jesus properly, one must have some genuine knowledge of who He is and why He is capable of saving those who trust Him. But the Bible never teaches that it is necessary to have a correct understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity in order to be saved. All that is required is trusting in Jesus, the One who is truly God and truly man, and who died for our sins and rose from the dead in order to reconcile us to God.

So the bottom line is this: although your friend has an unorthodox view of the Trinity, I personally believe that he or she can still be saved through genuine faith in Christ. Of course, if one were to deny the deity of Christ, that would be another issue! But in the case of your friend, what he or she essentially holds is a modalistic doctrine of the Trinity. And this doctrine, while unorthodox, does not deny the deity of

the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; it rather denies that there are three coequal and coeternal persons who are God. This is significant, to be sure. But I don't think it's the kind of false belief that will prevent someone who genuinely trusts in Jesus from being saved.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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"How Many Bethlehem Children Were Killed by Herod?"

I was reading your Christmas Quiz and I wondered if you had researched the number of children killed by Herod? Matthew doesn't mention the gender. Would these be Joseph and Mary's nephews and/or nieces, or distant relations? How long were Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem? Would they have known some of these children? Did Jesus ever go back to Bethlehem to minister?

We do not know the number of infant boys killed as a result of Herod's order. Scholars estimate that it was probably no more than a dozen (because Bethlehem's population was small and the order only concerned infant boys age two and under). Note that Matthew 2:16 does specifically mention "boys" or "males."

We simply are not given enough information to know much about these children. We don't know if any of them were related to Joseph and Mary or not. Although they may have known many of these other children and their families, we are not provided with all the details about this event that we might like. In

fact, as far as I know, Matthew is the only author who records this event. His account is all the information we possess. It seems possible (maybe even probable) that the family was in Bethlehem for quite some time before fleeing to Egypt (Matt. 2:13). According to Matthew, the family was in a "house" when the wise men arrived (2:11) and Jesus is called a "child" (Gr. *paidion*), instead of "baby" (Gr. *brephos*, Luke 2:12. In addition, Herod inquires about the precise time at which the magi saw the star (Matt. 2:7), and this becomes the basis for Herod's killing all the male children two years old and under (2:16). Hence, the family may have been there nearly two years by the time they fled to Egypt. Of course, we really just don't know all the details about the timing of these events. But I'm somewhat inclined to think they may have been in Bethlehem long enough to get to know many of their neighbors—particularly those who had children roughly the same age as Jesus.

Concerning your final question, we are just never told whether or not Jesus returned to Bethlehem. The Bible is simply silent about this, so far as I can tell.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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"What's the Difference Between Reiki and the

Biblical Practice of Laying On of Hands?”

I’m researching Reiki and found a website that purports to be “Christian Reiki.” The woman who does this says she only connects with the Holy Spirit inside of her for the energy she uses. She commits each session to God and communicates with the Holy Spirit by means of prayer during the session. She further states that the Reiki symbols she uses to deliver that energy actually have no meaning but that they act as focus points for transmission of energy. I would tend to be a little leery about this but want to know, how does this differ from the Christian “laying on of hands”?

Yes; I think this does differ from the Christian “laying on of hands” (1 Tim. 5:22).

Christians lay hands on a brother or sister in Christ as an act of identification. They identify with another believer who is part of the body of Christ. When we then pray for that individual’s healing, there is no attempt to channel “energy” of some sort to bring the person healing. Rather, we simply make a request that God would heal the person if it is His will to do so. Sometimes He is willing; sometimes not. But this is a choice for God; we are simply making a request, subject to His will.

There just isn’t any biblical warrant for “Christian” Reiki, so far as I can see. We are never commanded (or even encouraged) to channel spiritual “energy” for the healing of others. Indeed, I think the biblical authors would regard such a practice as highly suspect. We are simply encouraged to pray for their healing. And this is something we can do (and that the church has always done) without any assistance from the practice of Reiki.

In this respect I don't see what "Christian Reiki" adds to the equation (that isn't accomplished simply through prayer to God). If the Reiki practitioner thinks that Reiki gives them power or authority over the Holy Spirit, then such a belief is totally absurd and unbiblical. God is sovereign and is not in any way subject to the will and manipulation of men. So it seems to me that Reiki is a questionable practice for Christians, that adds nothing to simple prayer, and that is possibly grounded in some very unbiblical beliefs about God and healing, etc.

At any rate, that's my view of the matter.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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"Does the Bible Talk About Reincarnation?"

Does the Bible ever talk about reincarnation?

The short answer is "No; the Bible nowhere speaks of reincarnation." Unfortunately, however, some people have claimed to find evidence for this belief in the Bible. For example, John the Baptist is often claimed to be the reincarnation of Elijah.

This is a popular "New Age" sort of interpretation. Of course, no respected biblical scholar would accept this interpretation as true.

And it certainly wasn't the view of Jesus, His disciples, John the Baptist, or the Gospel writers. Luke 1:17 tells us that John came in the "spirit and power" of Elijah, which is far different than asserting that John was the reincarnation of Elijah. In addition, it's important to remember that Moses and Elijah appeared to Jesus, Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration. But as Geisler and Rhodes observe, "Since John [the Baptist] had already lived and died by then, and since Elijah still had the same name and self-consciousness, Elijah had obviously not been reincarnated as John the Baptist." Third, we must remember that Elijah never died (2 Kings 2:11); therefore, he doesn't fit the reincarnation model.

An important verse to bear in mind in these discussions is Hebrews 9:27. This verse teaches us that we die once, and then face God's judgment. The consequences of that judgment, according to the Bible, are eternal—not temporal (Matt. 25:46; 2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 20:10-15).

If you would like more information about this subject, please see the following two resources on Probe's website:

1. The Mystery of Reincarnation – www.probe.org/the-mystery-of-reincarnation/

2. "Was Reincarnation Ever in the Bible?" – www.probe.org/was-reincarnation-ever-in-the-bible/

Shalom in Christ,
Michael Gleghorn

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