“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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“Can a Christian Lose His Salvation?”

I have been debating a Christian online about whether salvation is permanent, which I believe it is. I have seen many scriptures that show this is the case but the person I am debating has brought up two verses I have never looked at before and I dont know how to respond. The verses are 2 Peter 2:20-21:

> ***“For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them.”***

I looked in a couple of commentaries as well as in *When Critics Ask* (by Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe) and they either said nothing about it or they didnt address the issue at hand.I have just within the last month or two started getting your newsletter and reading your articles/e-mail responses and I have been very impressed. So I was hoping that you could shed some light on this issue.

You have brought up a great question! The security of every believer is a critical issue in the Christian life. John 10:28-30 assures us that if we are given eternal life by God through Jesus Christ, no one can snatch us from the Father’s hand. Romans 8:28-39 also guarantees that nothing in all of reality can separate us from the love of God in Christ.

With that said, there is the issue of the “apparent” problem passages. Of them, 2 Peter 2:20-21 seems a real nasty one. But upon reading the entire epistle from Peter, one can see that

the people in question are false teachers. Peter's perspective, as that of Jude in Jude 19, is that these false teachers were not truly Christian. As Jude puts it, they are "wordly-minded, devoid of the Spirit." Most likely these teachers publicly professed Christ as their Lord, but their subsequent rejection verified their unchanged spiritual condition.

The Bible as a whole teaches that believers are securely held in God's hand. But let us be careful not to judge others because of what we see or don't see. Challenge one another in perseverance to bear fruit, but leave the final judgment to the word of God that is "able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Thanks so much for your insightful question. God gives understanding to those who seek it as if searching for buried treasure and precious silver. [Proverbs 2:3-5]

Kris Samons
Probe Ministries