

Believers can be sure of their salvation

Can a believer be sure of salvation? The Bible answers in the affirmative. Yes, believers can be sure of their salvation. Believers can be sure for a number of reasons. First of all, God cannot lie. His promise of salvation is the assurance of salvation (Titus 1:2). Second, Jesus secured forgiveness for all people. There is no one he left out. He died for the sins of the whole world. Then Jesus did all that is necessary to gain our forgiveness. There is nothing we need to do or can do to earn salvation. God gives us the righteousness and forgiveness won by Christ as a free gift through faith (John 3:16; Acts 16:31; Matt. 9:2; John 10:28). Faith will be strong when it rests securely on Christ and His promises. Faith becomes weak when it does not lay hold of, or is ignorant of, Christ's promises. Peter's faith grew weak when he saw the wind and the waves on the Sea of Galilee. He gave in to fear, doubting Jesus' promises. His reason told him that people don't walk on water. Thus he began to sink. Jesus rebuked him for his doubt (Matt. 14:31). Had his faith rested firmly on Jesus and His promises, Peter would have continued to walk on the water.

An example of a faith that "walked on water" is the Syrophenician woman. Even though her reason told her that Jesus was sending her away without a hearing, her heart still clung to the love and promises of the Saviour. Her trust was not disappointed. Jesus answered her prayer and commended her faith, (Matt. 15:28).

A lack of good works will reveal that faith has grown weak. Jesus admonished the church in Ephesus because their "first love" had grown cold (Rev. 2:1-6). A lack of good works indicates a weak faith, but good works do not strengthen faith. Only the Holy Spirit, through the gospel and sacraments, can strengthen faith.

Doubt will weaken faith. Some have said that doubt is a good thing. This, however, is not true. Yes, we are to check what people say by comparing their teaching to the Bible, as did the Bereans on Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 17:10ff.). However, when God speaks to us in His Word, we are to believe and not to doubt (James 1:5-7). Doubting is telling God that He is not to be trusted. John even says that those who do not believe God in reality call Him a liar (1 John 5:10-12).

The apostle Paul demonstrated the certainty Christians have through faith in Christ Jesus. Awaiting execution in a Roman prison, Paul could say with certainty, *"I am not ashamed. For I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that He is able to guard what has been entrusted to me until that day,"* (2 Tim. 1:12). *"For the future, there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing,"* (2 Tim. 4:8). Paul had written to the Christians at Rome, *"Hope does not disappoint us either, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to us,"* (Rom. 5:5). The Holy Spirit Himself *"testifies with [literally, to] our spirit that we are God's children,"* (Rom. 8:16). The end result of His testimony is that He produces within us the "deep conviction" of faith (1 Thess. 1:5).