

The Narrow Gate Update

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"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." (Matt. 7:13-14)

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SOBERING THOUGHTS ON ETERNAL SECURITY

I Peter 1:5 clearly declares that we are "kept by the power of God," but it doesn't stop there. Many who teach that God -- and only God -- does the keeping are correct in that fact, but unfortunately, they also deny the faith that it takes for God to keep us. I Peter 1:5 goes on to say, "through faith." The whole verse of scripture reads, "*Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*"

In trying to explain the goodness and power of God, many well-meaning people take the above verse found in I Peter to prove that works aren't part of being "kept" by God. And right they are except for the fact that they conveniently leave out the "through faith" part. This was done by a junior pastor in my own hearing some years ago and it's done by Dave Hunt in his book "*An Urgent Call to a Serious Faith: A Prophetic Alarm for the Bride of Christ*", p. 209)

In defense of Hunt, he was trying to explain why it's always God's grace and never man's works that prepares us for eternal salvation. I agree! Nevertheless, works is not the only rival to God's power shown to us through His grace.

Our faith plays an equally important role in receiving this grace; although, His grace is the greater of the two. Without "grace" our faith has nothing earnestly to hope for, because God is the engineer who designed, according to His will, the whole of salvation in the first place. In the second, He desires that we, of our own volition, without being coerced, accept His free gift of complete pardon for our sins. It must be free or it would not be a gift and it must be freely accepted by the recipient or it also would nullify the quality of being a gift; no price or work could ever be offered in exchange for this salvation package.

It should be obvious that the two concepts of the gift, the giving and the receiving of it, must work in tandem in order to have a harmonious and successful outcome. There are those on one side who insist that God alone is involved in every aspect of Salvation and that He cannot be "helped" by us in any way, shape, or form. However, there are the many scriptures that clearly state that we must choose Him and His Gospel in order to be saved. There is Ephesians 2:8 that makes the claim that we are saved by grace "through faith." Just like we're kept by God "through faith" in I Peter 1:5.

If God alone is to be credited for the actual realization of "someone's" salvation and that the "someone" had absolutely nothing to do with it, then we must ask why everyone who ever lived isn't saved. Of course, there are those, especially from the Emergent Church and New Apostolic Reformation crowd who believe and teach: "since Jesus paid the price for the whole world, then the whole world is saved; period." This is technically called *Universalism*, where everyone, no matter their belief system, is ultimately saved. Can this be true? We also have another sort of "obstacle" which teaches that God in His wisdom, and according to

His pleasure, chose certain ones to be with Him in heaven and certain others to go to hell, also according to His pleasure. This is the repulsive teaching of Calvinism, no matter if it be the hyper, hypo, or the so-called moderate aspect of it.

It seems pretty simple: God has written in His Word, the Bible, that it depends on our personal faith in Him and His Gospel that makes all the difference. If He chose some to be eternally saved, then why didn't He choose all the others, the majority I might add, to enjoy the same blessing; after all, He is Love isn't He?

So, in the question of eternal security we can be assured that it is only for true believers, the ones who put both their trust, and their obedience in line with His demands. It is the obedient believer who loves Him according to John 14:21, not just the one who makes such claims without the corresponding action. James 2:14-17 is clear, "*Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*" Just "believing" is nothing, even the *demons* do that, James 2:19, and what's more, they have something real – the fear of God-- which God commands of every man, woman and child and, so, too the demons also *tremble*. Sadly, this fear of God is something that most of modern mankind finds ridiculous, while, it ironically bows to superstitions; but, of course, would never admit to it. The importance of the part each and every person has to play in their own salvation is crucial because God had demanded it to be so. It is He who demands that we trust Him fully. it is He that cannot be pleased without faith (Hebrews 11:6). It is He that takes that faith and as a consequence of it, saves and keeps His true children. The Bible teaches that God has no pleasure in "... *the death of him that dieth, wherefore turn yourselves and live ye.*" Ezekiel 18:32

It's interesting that the scripture says to turn yourselves. Apparently, God isn't going to do any turning here. Obviously, it points back to our involvement as the second, the lesser part of this salvation package, God's grace being greatly in the forefront. I Timothy 2:4 declares with reference to the Lord, "*Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.*"

If God wants all men to be saved and know the truth, He cannot also deliberately save some special ones and damn others to the Lake of Fire, much less do this at "His pleasure," which Calvinists heretically claim. I'm going to believe what the Bible says not Calvin nor any of his perverted followers.

This issue with "faith" is also the crux that makes even otherwise good commentators miss the boat when explaining eternal security and when they use the phrase, *once saved, always saved*. Their argument really has little to do with salvation rather it is a matter of faith that is being pronounced as being "ever present" once it has come. Here is where they falter immensely. While eternal security is a biblical fact for a true believer who continues believing and who continues doing works that undergird that faith, the sticking point remains: "Is a person a true believer?"

If we are to choose ourselves as God says in a multitude of verses in the Bible, O.T. and N.T., then it should be clear that God has willed it to be just so. Faith in God is the Christian's response to God's provision. Hebrews 10:38 in quoting Habakkuk admonishes, like Habakkuk, men to "not shrink back from faith." Any warning, like Habakkuk's, is wasted and useless if the danger is not really possible. The just, the one justified by God because of his/her faith, shall live by faith, the prophet declared. There's no way around the fact that faith in God comes from the individual person who has decided to believe His Word and promises and who fears Him justly.

The grace/gift of God produces faith, but only in those who trust and believe in it. "I have kept the faith." Paul says, not God has kept it for him. (II Timothy 4:7) Clearly, it is our responsibility to keep the faith. Romans 15:31 says that Paul wants to be delivered from those who do not believe. II Thessalonians 3:2 says that not all have faith. Again, if God is solely responsible and He declares that He wants all men to be saved

and come to the knowledge of the Truth -- Who is Jesus come in the flesh -- in John 14:6, then how could it be that "*all men have not faith?*"

Since God doesn't send people to hell out of some supposed "pleasure" He gets out of it, as per John Calvin, it can only be that the obvious free will He gave to all men is the key. Indeed, we must choose. As Peter Forsyth has cleverly pointed out, "*The first duty of every soul is not to find its freedom, but to choose its Master.*" [underline mine]

Another fact of Scripture we have to consider is that Paul never says that salvation is on account of faith, rather, through faith, because faith is not the cause, only the channel through which our salvation comes. No open channel; no flow towards salvation. We open the channel or the door to freely allow God's grace/gift, that is, the whole complete blueprint, to flow in and saturate our being. This, then, is what the true believer follows to the end of his or her life; to be eternally saved and enjoy the blessings of the heavenly kingdom.

Paul, again, confirms that it is we believers who give Christ something to keep. In II Timothy 1:12 we read, "*... for I know in whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against the day of judgment.*"

The wonder is that Christ can keep even that which we imperfectly, to say the least, have given Him in total commitment. The key here is total commitment. No partial or half-way faith is accepted by God.

Even God cannot "keep" anything we give Him that is not real. Nor would His justice and holiness permit it. Likewise, Timothy was commanded to "*fight the good fight of faith*" in I Timothy 6:12. He was told to do this in order to *lay hold* of eternal life. Clearly Paul believed that it was Timothy who was to do the fighting, the laying hold of, by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit doesn't give us this faith, rather He draws us to this total trust with the Word.

"It is not superior self-control that separates Christian from pagan, but intimate acquaintance with God. (Ps 79:6; Jer 10:25). Hosea and Jeremiah both stress the essentiality of the knowledge of God (Hos 4:6; 6:6; Jer 4:22), involving love and obedience. It is the essence of salvation." (David A. Hubbard, The New Testament & Wycliff Bible Commentary: p.816, I Thess. 4:5)

"The believers obey God's directive to not sin because of their personal relationship with God - knowing Him intimately, because of time spent in the Word, in prayer, and in fellowship. The pagan can only demonstrate "self-control" which cannot ever be free. When self fails, only self can be blamed - when the believer fails, there is forgiveness." (ibid)

That it is not totally God alone, but also our choice to be led by God, is further demonstrated by W. E. Vine in defining the Greek Ekklektos = Picked out, chosen, to gather. "*While Christ's death was sufficient for all men, and is effective in the case of the elect, yet men are treated as responsible, being capable of the will and power to choose.*" [Vine's p. 352] "*Election has for its object our obedience.*"

"The obedience of which faith is the substance in assurance Heb 11:1. The obedience we render God when we believingly receive the truths of the gospel. The obedience which faith produces." (J. C. Jones, D. D.)

Being filled with the Spirit, as in Ephesians 5:18, means that the believer is to yield so fully to the Spirit that He, the Spirit, can fully control the saint. The yielding is what the saint must do, then God the Holy Spirit will lead, guide, and direct according to His will.

A. Berkley Mickelsen in commenting on Romans 11:20 where we're told by Paul that Israel was broken off because of unbelief has stated, *"The difference between the branches broken off and the branches grafted in consists in the presence of faith. Unbelief meant rejection. Faith meant acceptance."* (Mickelsen; Wycliff NTBC p.566 on Rom 11:22. Underline mine)

God broke off the natural but unbelieving branches of Israel and replaced them by unnatural but believing branches of Gentiles. Then Paul says that if God didn't spare the natural branches, take heed, for, He might not spare you either; or if you're resting in a false sense of security based on pride, as in, *we're able to deal with things ourselves*; or when error has set in by believing in extra-biblical denominational doctrines.

"It is very clear that the Lord has acted "for" and "in" those who are in Christ. But it is equally clear that those "in Christ" must act: they must continue; they must bear fruit. Their action, the writer shows, is just as essential as God's action in bringing them to himself and putting them in Christ. If a teacher minimizes either of these two aspects - God's action or the believer's response - he has departed from the N. T." (ibid)

I wager that none of us truly understands all there is to know on this subject. It is, therefore, wise to let God interpret as He sees fit for each individual. His written Word is the standard!

Through faith —*"The Apostle is fearful lest the last words should give a false assurance. God can guard none of us, in spite of His "power," unless there be a corresponding exertion upon our part—which is here called "faith"—combining the notions of staunch fidelity and of trustfulness in spite of appearances. It is through such trustful fidelity that we are guarded."* (Ellicott on I Peter 1:5)

"Let none flatter himself he is being guarded by the power of God unto salvation, if he be not walking by faith. Neither speculative knowledge and reason, nor works of seeming charity, will avail, severed from faith. It is through faith that salvation is both received and kept." (Jamieson, Faussett, Brown - Underline mine) (dia pisteos)

Understanding important biblical terms and what they actually mean is the key to the peace that comes only from having a close personal relationship with Jesus, the Word of God.

Hallelujah to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world! ~



Q & A

Q: Does the Mosaic Law still apply to us?

A: The Mosaic Law was given to Israel only and is no longer in affect since Christ is the end of the law. (Ro 10:4) However, every Jew who has not received Christ Jesus as Savior must keep the law of Moses. We Christians, according to Romans 3:31, establish the law through our faith since Christ fully kept all the law to qualify as Savior on the Cross. It was His perfect law-keeping that played a major part in the salvation of mankind. Without the law being perfectly kept by Christ He could not have died as Savior. ~

We welcome any questions you may have regarding any subjects we have written about in this newsletter, any of Walt's sermons you may have seen on YouTube, or any other biblical subjects.

You may send them via

email - jw.hartwich@gmail.com

text - 765-714-5113

or regular mail - P.O. Box 823, Frankfort, IN 46041 ~



WORSHIP SERVICE & BIBLE STUDY....

The Berean Way Fellowship: Sunday 10:30am, Lafayette, IN

Home Bible Study: Wednesday night 6:30pm, Lafayette; call 765-714-5113 for specific location. ~



WALT'S SUNDAY SERMONS

can be seen on YouTube or on our website <https://thebereanwayfellowship.org>. The archives can also be accessed on YouTube by searching for Walt Hartwich, Victory Seekers Church, or Victory Seekers Ministries. ~

Walt: "Aaoouu!!"



RECOMMENDED BOOKS, SERMONS, AND AUTHORS

Leonard Ravenhill's various sermons and books; J.B. Phillips's books *The New Testament in Modern English* and *Ring of Truth: A Translator's Testimony*; and Irenaeus's book *Against Heresies* (he lived in the 2nd century and was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a direct disciple of the Apostle John). ~

PRAYER REQUESTS....



We hope that you all will join us in our prayers, remembering the Persecuted Church, praying for the health of all brothers and sisters in Christ, asking that we might live according to the will of God.

Pray for His wisdom, especially in not being deceived by the enemy. Pray also that all believers in Christ Jesus would be good witnesses for Him by the way we live our lives and our obedience to His commandments. Pray for the salvation of all the unsaved family members of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ and that the fullness of the Gentiles would come in per Romans 11:25. Pray for our leaders, as Paul says in 1 Timothy 2:1-2. Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem—the soon coming of our Lord Jesus, because only when He comes will there truly be peace.

Praise God in all things and to God be the glory for all that is good! ~

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"No man can be true to God and escape unpopularity." (Author Unknown)
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We wish to thank God for supplying the ways and means for publishing this quarterly update, and those whose hearts He has moved to donate to the cause of teaching the church. **All donations are appreciated and should be sent to The Berean Way Fellowship, P.O. Box 823, Frankfort, IN 46041, with "for NGU" in the memo for a tax-deductible qualification.**

We solicit your prayers for our ministry that we will continue with boldness as we present the truth, no matter what, and that **we** will not be deceived as **no one** is immune.

If you would like Walt to speak at your church or Bible study or other group, or if you have questions regarding anything you've read in our Update or on any biblical subject, you may send your requests via mail, or by email to jw.hartwich@gmail.com, or by calling 765-426-1413.

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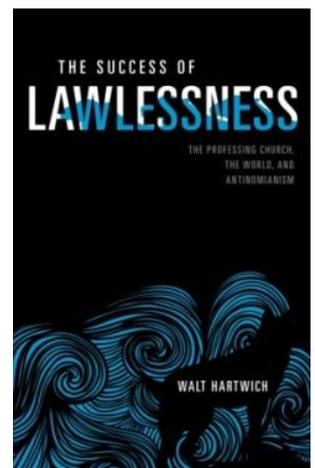
THOUGHT-PROVOKING, SOBERING, POLITICALLY INCORRECT AND CONTROVERSIAL, YET QUITE REVEALING.... Gary Kah, popular author and conference speaker

THE SUCCESS OF LAWLESSNESS: The Professing Church, the World, and Antinomianism, by Walt Hartwich

The unconscionable destruction of planet earth as we know it, which results in the battle of Armageddon or WWII, will be the culmination of global lawlessness.

In *The Success of Lawlessness* the author details how and why lawlessness is a success. He points out that world leaders routinely deviate from the dictates of their governments' constitutions in the five basic realms of modern human existence: political, financial, educational, medical, and spiritual. This deviation is what results in complete lawlessness, which is achieved by incorporating the concept of the fourth kind of appearances as it was first formulated by first-century-B.C. Greek philosopher Epictetus.

There's only one sensible conclusion the searching mind can reach considering the evidence presented in these pages: **Sin = Lawlessness. (I John 3:4)**



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