

Revivals And Church History :: John Wesley not saved?

John Wesley not saved? - posted by BeYeDoers (), on: 2007/8/13 11:35

The church I have been attending for several months does a great job of preaching against sin, unlike most churches I've ever been in. They are Calvinist in theology, which I am most definitely not, but I can agree to disagree if they can. However, some of the pastors and elders are very much opposed to Wesley and his theology. I don't know if they go as far as crying "heretic!" but it's not too far from that. The following was written by one of the elders:

One of the great joys of my life has been reading the books written by Iain Murray. Pastor Murray was the former assistant of Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones at Westminster Chapel in London. He also pastored churches in England and Australia, as well as working for the Banner of Truth publishing company. I could list all of Murray's books and tell of the impact they have made on my life but that would take too long.

Recently, I've enjoyed reading one of his books, Wesley and the Men Who Followed (Banner, 2003). He answered some questions I've had about John Wesley for many years.

Wesley's conversion was a difficult process, one that John himself struggled to understand. Though brought up in a pastor's home, he went off to Oxford University as an unconverted man...

He used to meet with a group of friends (including George Whitefield and his brother Charles) for Bible study. The members of the group rose early for lengthy devotions and tried not to waste a moment of the day. In the evening they wrote in a Diary and would examine the day's activities to see if they had committed any fault. They took the Eucharist each Sunday and fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays. Saturdays were used to prepare for the Lord's Day. They were deeply committed to the Church of England and believed in its doctrine. They visited prisoners and the poor and contributed from their meager income to run a school for the children of prison inmates. These activities, they believed, would contribute to the salvation of their own souls. Clearly the group was not evangelical and it did not bring the satisfaction that each of the members sought from the group.

Wesley left Oxford still in an unregenerate state. Ordained in 1735 he and his brother left for the wilds of America to serve as missionaries to the Indians and colonists in the state of Georgia. Their time there was a failure. Three years later, Wesley wrote, "I went to America to convert Indians, but, oh, who shall convert me?"

After their return to England, John sought out some Moravian Christians. He had had contact with some in Georgia and they had challenged his lack of assurance of salvation. One of the Moravians, Peter Bohler, was instrumental in helping the Wesley brothers toward an understanding of justifying faith. On 24 May 1738, John went to a meeting in Aldersgate Street in London. Someone read from the Preface of Martin Luther's commentary on Romans. Wesley wrote the following in his journal: "About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

Many people know this part of the story. What many don't know is that within a year (January 1739), Wesley was writing in his journal,

"My friends affirm I am mad, because I said I was not a Christian a year ago. I affirm I am not a Christian now... For a Christian is one who has the fruits of the Spirit of Christ, which (to mention no more) are love, peace, joy... And I feel this moment I do not love God... joy in the Holy Ghost I have not... though I have constantly used all the means of grace for twenty years, I am not a Christian" (Murray 2003:8-9).

What's going on here? I never could figure it out. Then I recently came across this letter written by John to his brother Charles in June of 1766.

"In one of my last I was saying that I do not feel the wrath of God abiding on me; nor can I believe it does. And yet (this is the mystery), I do not love God. I never did. Therefore I never believed, in the Christian sense of the word. Therefore I am only an honest heathen... And yet, to be so employed of God! And so hedged in that I can neither get forward nor backward! Surely there was never such an instance before, from the beginning of the world! If I ever have had that faith, it would not be so strange. But I never had any other evidence of the eternal or invisible world than I have now; and that

It is none at all, unless such as faintly shines from reason's glimmering ray. I have no direct witness (I do not say, that I am a child of God, but) of anything invisible or eternal.

"And yet I dare not preach otherwise than I do, either concerning faith, or love, or justification, or perfection. And yet I find rather an increase than a decrease of zeal for the whole work of God and every part of it. I am borne along, I know not how, that I can't stand still. I want all the world to come to what I do not know." (Quoted in Stephen Tomkins, 2003, John Wesley: A Biography, Eerdmans, p. 168.)

Once again, what's going on here? How could Wesley criss-cross England on horse-back, preaching himself into exhaustion, for a faith he seems to wonder if he actually possessed? Murray helped me to understand that several things were at work.

Unfortunately, the Moravians believed that if one has true faith, then one is totally released from all doubts and Wesley, at least for a time, adopted this belief. If you have any remaining doubts, then you do not yet have true faith. Assurance of salvation, they claimed, always accompanies justification. This understanding of faith and assurance departed from the Puritan understanding that one may have true faith and yet lack an assurance of salvation. The Westminster Confession of Faith states, "This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties before he be partaker of it" (WCF, 18,3). Wesley and the Moravians denied this. So whenever any doubts or fears raised their ugly head, it meant that one was not a true believer. (See Murray 2003: 48-55.)

Similarly, Murray points out that Wesley was not clear about the meaning of the witness of the Holy Spirit. The eighth chapter of Romans says that the Spirit bears witness with our Spirit that we are children of God. Murray has read several sermons on the witness of the Spirit and he is not sure if Wesley ever came to understand this doctrine (Murray 2003:76, note 1).

Finally, Wesley also appears to have had real questions on the nature of justification. At the beginning of his ministry (late 1730s, early 1740s), he clearly held to the historic Protestant doctrine. One of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England states, "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ by faith," and Wesley wholeheartedly agreed. And yet, later on in his ministry, he started to waver. He began by questioning the reality of the imputation of Christ's righteousness in the 1740s and 1750s. The controversy got even worse when the minutes of the 1770 Methodist Conference of Ministers were published. They asked,

Does not talking of a justified or a sanctified state tend to mislead men? Almost naturally leading them to trust in what was done in one moment? Whereas we are every hour and every moment pleasing or displeasing to God, "according to our works"; -- according to the whole of our inward tempers, and our outward behavior." Any other view of justification will not lead the believer to pursue holiness with vigor and will tend to promote "careless living" (Murray 2003:221). After these minutes were published, Wesley had to do a lot of damage control, making clear that he abhorred the doctrine of justification by works. At the very least, however, these brief snippets show us that Wesley was not clear on the nature of justification. And if one is not clear here, you will always face real questions about whether or not you are a Christian.

The evangelicalism in which I was raised didn't help me on any of these topics. I heard many sermons growing up that promoted a Moravian understanding of faith and assurance. If I had any doubts or lacked a full assurance of salvation, I was not a real Christian and needed to receive Christ again. I can't think of any sermons I ever heard on the witness of the Spirit. That was unknown territory. And when I finally came to understand the historic Protestant teaching on justification, it seemed like I was hearing it for the first time. Maybe it was preached but I didn't yet have ears to hear; or maybe it wasn't preached with real clarity.

What think ye?

Re: John Wesley not saved? - posted by roaringlamb (), on: 2007/8/13 12:13

Thank you for posting this. I have wondered much about Wesley's zeal, and while good, much of it seems to be motivated by fear of God, rather than love for God. Thus you see the urging of morals and extra rules to maintain a state of justification.

It seems the Church of England while at the start with the 39 articles held to the Orthodox view of justification by faith through Christ, they began to blur the lines of justification and sanctification and basically said that the one determined the other, which is nothing less than the Roman Catholic semi-Pelagian view.

I would also recommend the book "Revival and Revivalism" by Murray.

Re: John Wesley not saved?, on: 2007/8/13 12:48

Just as we can not sit in judgement of someone's salvation that is here among us, we can not pretend to sit in judgment on someone who lived 300 years ago either. Yes, we can read their writings and determine whether or not we agree with what they wrote... but history is written not by those who lived it, but by those who came after, and it is hardly ever without prejudice.

I read many biographies on Abe Lincoln... half of them show him as a deity almost, others show him as a tyrant. Which is true? Perhaps a little of both... but the point is, even a review of someone's own writings can be slanted. Taken out of context, etc.

People do it everyday to scripture right here on this forum. Why should we trust a quote given out by someone as being something Wesley wrote?

So I object to the title of this thread. Who are we to put ourselves on the throne of God and determine if a man was saved who lived 300 years ago? All any of us know of the man is what the historians have told us.

That's like trying to determine the true character of a public figure based on what we read in the media. Only a fool would do such a thing.

Weigh his teachings against scripture... judge his words. Examine his doctrine. But no one here is qualified to sit in judgment of his personal walk with the Lord.

Krispy

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2007/8/13 13:28

Quote:

-----Weigh his teachings against scripture... judge his words. Examine his doctrine.

The troubling thing about any teaching that borders on justification by sanctification is that folk always end up wondering if they are right with God no matter how they holy and righteous lived. Folk come away wondering if God really loves them.

Another troubling thing is that Christian Perfection can become a stumbling block for those who cannot free themselves from salvation by sanctification. The tendency is to focus the scriptures to prove that Christians can and should walk and live sinlessly. No doubt this is God's design, but are we saved based upon how sanctified we are?

Revivalism strips away assurance. That is the primary strategy. Finney believed folk needed this done to them almost regularly. The sense is that folk need to be 'tightened down' over and over again to keep them spiritually alert and walking in 'holiness'. But this is as crazy as believing that tightening the lug nuts on your car every few weeks is a good thing. In time the metal will fatigue and the bolts will snap off. I think something similar happens to folk who dwell all the time on whether or not they measure up.

Truthfully, more and more each day I think it is dangerous to take hold of God's word and slice and dice the parts out that

t focus on justification by sanctification. Almost like some ministers are able to 'distill' the most fearful passages into some sort of caustic mixture that sears the soul. When I read Wesley I read a man bound and determined to prove that Christians can live a sinless life from the beginning. Some say he believed it was his calling?

One thing I know for certain; I am NOT perfect. I realize how far short I fall more and more all the time. I see Christians that are not perfect. I see men and women that I know love God- that are not perfect. Sometimes our rhetoric slays us. We talk a game we can't live up to. Men have extrapolated verses of scripture from their context to make the 'perfect' believer and then says- "walk ye in it." Makes a lot of people just despair or want to give up who are sincerely trying to live the life. if Wesley questioned his salvation (and I have not read where he did) it could only mean that he knew he was not perfect.

Re: - posted by hmmhmm (), on: 2007/8/13 14:30

Luke 6:41 And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

I think many criticize Wesley for his doctrines and teachings who they themselves have not come to the standard of his holy living.... but then they have a "doctrine" to be proud of.

lets take "heed" brethren.

Re: - posted by Eli_Barnabas (), on: 2007/8/13 14:53

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I appreciate your comments brother Robert.

Re:, on: 2007/8/13 15:35

I've noticed something recently on this site, a troubling trend that I haven't noticed before... there are folks here that are declaring that you must believe particular pet doctrines in order to be saved.

We've had Calvinists declare right on this forum that if you don't believe in the teachings of Calvin... you're not a Christian.

We've now got believers in "entire sanctification" (a term not found in the Bible!) saying that you are falling short if you're not perfect and sinless.

We've got post-tribbers accusing believers of being apostate if they believe in a pre-trib rapture.

Where is this coming from???

So I don't believe in Calvinism... so what? What in the world does that have to do with my salvation? So I am honest enough to admit that I struggle with the flesh daily... and sometimes lose... so what? This means I'm not saved? So I believe in a pre-trib rapture... so what? Does this mean I'm doomed to hell?

I think perhaps it's time a few people came down off their soap box of pride and start serving their fellow man and reaching the lost for Jesus Christ.

While correct doctrine is important, and while we are to earnestly contend for the faith, and while we are to be Bereans, and while we are to mark and avoid those who teach false doctrine.... I fear many here have forgotten the most important law of all... a law given to us by the ultimate Law Giver (Jesus)... and that is the law of love.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13 *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as so unding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.

And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.

I have tried to set an example on this forum... I've been in some pretty heated debates about the KJV from time to time. But I don't believe anyone here has ever come away from those debates feeling like I have judged them as a 2nd class Christian, or an apostate, or whatever simply because we don't agree on that issue.

I wish others could do the same with other topics.

We're not saved because we are a Calvinist or an Arminian. Our salvation is not based on when we think the Rapture is. Our salvation is not hinged on what version of the Bible we read. And our salvation certainly is not based on our efforts at being sinless and perfect (especially there is none righteous... no, not one!).

I don't know why this boiled up in me at this particular moment... it's not aimed at anyone in particular... perhaps the Lord just wanted someone to read these words.

Krispy

Re:, on: 2007/8/13 15:56

Quote:

-----... perhaps the Lord just wanted someone to read these words.

That would be me. Somehow your words have comforted me slightly in a difficult time.

The Lord can use anything.

Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2007/8/13 16:24

As to understanding the ins-and-outs of Wesley's theology, I cannot recommend enough the writings of Kenneth J. Collins. I've yet to come across a writer with a better grasp of Wesley's theology, especially as it changed over time. As to Wesley's "doubts," I think one could liken them to the bi-polar nature of David Brainerd in his experience with God. As Wesley was ever the practical theologian, his understanding of "the witness" of the Spirit was something he wanted to experience every moment of every day.

Thus, if there was a day or two he didn't experience an ever abiding sense of God's presence and witness, he wondered perhaps if he had wandered from the faith and was in danger of hell. Brainerd, if you read his diary, wasn't much different. Practically, the experience is pretty much the same. The only difference is the language used to express the same practical realities.

To call into question Wesley's salvation simply because of a growing (non-calvinist) theology, and a few down days entirely overlooks the whole of Wesley's life and theology, which, I believe shows he was saved. This elder seems more concerned about establishing a hero worship of one's theological tradition than truly investigating Wesley's thought and life.

Re: - posted by Compton (), on: 2007/8/13 16:41

Quote:

-----I've noticed something recently on this site, a troubling trend that I haven't noticed before... there are folks here that are declaring that you must believe particular pet doctrines in order to be saved.

I can confirm this observation more or less.

Oswald Chambers observed that we must allow for a certain measure of temporary fanaticism in people who have discovered a particular 'new' truth. I certainly can testify to this dynamic in myself. However, in time, what we learn today must be measured against the broader picture. This broader picture not only includes the wisdom of other mature saints in our midst, but also the whole of church history.

Otherwise we'll let our various facets of understanding, or pet doctrines as Kipsy said, become the entire gem we believe in. Even a mystery such as "leaving Babylon" can become the basis for a self-stylized dogma that pits Christians in homes against Christians in buildings...arbitrary yet hurtful and deep divisions sanctioned with only a "to him who has ears..." as a secret cryptic handshake among the 'true remnant.'

Quote:

-----Sometimes our rhetoric slays us. We talk a game we can't live up to.

Thank you Robert for this bit of valuable experience. I take it to heart brother.

MC

Re: - posted by sermonindex (), on: 2007/8/13 18:21

Quote:
-----Wesley's conversion was a difficult process, one that John himself struggled to understand. Though brought up in a pastor's home, he went off to Oxford University as an unconverted man...

He used to meet with a group of friends (including George Whitefield and his brother Charles) for Bible study. The members of the group rose early for lengthy devotions and tried not to waste a moment of the day. In the evening they wrote in a Diary and would examine the day's activities to see if they had committed any fault. They took the Eucharist each Sunday and fasted on Wednesdays and Fridays. Saturdays were used to prepare for the Lord's Day. They were deeply committed to the Church of England and believed in its doctrine. They visited prisoners and the poor and contributed from their meager income to run a school for the children of prison inmates. These activities, they believed, would contribute to the salvation of their own souls. Clearly the group was not evangelical and it did not bring the satisfaction that each of the members sought from the group.

Interesting thread! I have been reading the journals of George Whitefield where he states that he was saved in the midst of the holy club and then I would think he would renounce all these "works" they were doing but he continued with them finding them a sufficient means of exhibiting the grace of God working in his life. The sad evangelical stance on the holy club was that it was all legalism but it wasn't! If a person was saved those fruits that were being shown in the holy club were here fine.

God even used the unconverted Wesley many times to counsel the converted Whitefield. Wesley did receive a proper understanding of justification from the example and piety of the Moravians. He afterward had times to be around the Moravians that he accounted times where they were enraptured with the presence of God and reality in the Christian life.

Christian perfectionism is quite dangerous and it definitely catered to problems in the assurance of this experience in Wesley's life. He who "doubts" is damned! What a awful scripture to have to face in the light of such thinking. Many good men of God have had low points of doubting and crying out to God, this is biblical and not strange. But I would say most of the while Wesley's conversion was firm, resolute and strong. It is non sense to try and show from some various letters and quotes that he doubted his salvation most of his ministry.

But what this does teach us is that Wesley was a man like us with like passions! Oh how we can be used of God also.

Re: - posted by BeYeDoers (), on: 2007/8/13 20:20

Quote:
-----So I object to the title of this thread.

ok? Not sure what this means. If I said, "John Wesley was not saved" and then went on to give a dissertation on his thought life...then you would have a reason to accuse someone of playing God and sitting in judgment. But that is not what is going on.

I was simply posting something an elder at my church wrote because I wanted to get a better idea of why someone would have such strong opinions of a man whose theology and person I very much respect. There are many people here who know history and Wesley much more than I, so I hoped to get older, wiser perspectives.

I like you and respect you very much, Krispy, as I have told you in private. And I apologize if I upset you. But if you are accusing me of judging a man's salvation based on a four word question in the title to a long post, that is something I most definitely do not appreciate.

Your most recent post said you weren't aiming your thoughts at any one in particular, something just set you off. I hope this was the case in your first post as well. Let us please not make this personal...I hope I have not mislead folks in my intentions of this post.

Grace and Peace

Re: - posted by RobertW (), on: 2007/8/14 8:49

Quote:

-----But what this does teach us is that welsey was a man like us with like passions!

One of the greatest challenges to holding to such teachings too strongly is that a person begins to view themselves no longer as a 'person of like passions' but somehow needing to maintain a larger than life spirituality. This makes it almost impossible for the person to ever:

- 1) Admit they were wrong
- 2) Apologize
- 3) Ask forgiveness
- 4) Repent

To do any of these is an admission of guilt. To admit any of these is to suggest that the person is not 'perfect'. And though I strongly believe that men ought to strive to walk even as Christ walked- I am also aware of my own shortcomings and have to be willing to confess (acknowledge) them. The challenge is to believe in perfection without condemning one's own self as a hypocrite. To believe God will give us all things that pertain to life and godliness and yet still be able to repent of our own sins and not just glaze over them as if they didn't happen or were not as bad as someone else's.

Add to this an Oberlin type "justification by sanctification" and you have the recipe for an individual (such as I used to be) that is on the defensive every time a person 'claims' or even 'suggests' that one can live a sinless Christian life. The logic at work reasons that if a person 'can' live sinlessly then all that do not live sinlessly are without excuse and are therefore unsaved (non-Christians). God will save the 'sinless' ones and the others will be cast into the fire. If I know I am not sinless then I reason that all people are sinful to some degree- even Peter and Paul which brings me assurance. I am not advocating this reasoning- I am just trying to articulate how it works. This is why in many cases discussions on Christian Perfection create more heat than light. Because some people's assurance of salvation is on the line. They are pressing towards the mark- but they know they have not attained. To then undercut all the NT passages that show men of God in a less than perfect light- explaining them away one way or the other to prove polemically the 'doctrine' of Entire Sanctification creates a serious amount of kinetic energy.

Re: John Wesley not saved? - posted by Pilate, on: 2010/4/15 22:02

Quote:

-----Many people know this part of the story. What many don't know is that within a year (January 1739), Wesley was writing in his journal, "My friends affirm I am mad, because I said I was not a Christian a year ago. I affirm I am not a Christian now. For a Christian is one who has the fruits of the Spirit of Christ, which (to mention no more) are love, peace, joy. And I feel this moment I do not love God. joy in the Holy Ghost I have not. though I have constantly used all the means of grace for twenty years, I am not a Christian" (Murray 2003:8-9).

While I don't have time to look up the letter that is quoted from 1766, I did have time to look up the above quote from John Wesley's journal. It is dishonest to say that John Wesley was speaking of himself when the journal entries from January 1 and January 4, 1739 clearly show that he was speaking of someone other than himself. Read the entries yourself in the text that follows:

{John Wesley's journal entry, Mon . January 1, 1739. — Mr. Hall, Kinchin, Ingham, Whitefield, Hatchins, and my brother Charles, were present at our love-feast in Fetter-Lane, with about sixty of our brethren. About three in the morning, as we were continuing constant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, in so much that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of his Majesty, we broke out with one voice, "We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord."

Thur. 4. — One who had had the form of godliness many years, wrote the following reflections: — "My friends affirm I am mad, because I said I was not a Christian a year ago. I affirm, I am not a Christian now. Indeed, what I might have been I know not, had I been faithful to the grace then given, when, expecting nothing less, I received such a sense of the forgiveness of my sins, as till then I never knew. But that I am not a Christian at this day, I as assuredly know, as that Je

Wesley is the Christ. "For a Christian is one who has the fruits of the Spirit of Christ, which (to mention no more) are love, peace, joy. But these I have not. I have not any love of God. I do not love either the Father or the Son. Do you ask, how do I know whether I love God, I answer by another question, 'How do you know whether you love me?' Why, as you know whether you are hot or cold. You feel this moment, that you do or do not love me. And I feel this moment, I do not love God; which therefore I know, because I feel it. There is no word more proper, more clear, or more strong. "And I know it also by St. John's plain rule, 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' For I love the world. I desire the things of the world, some or other of them, and have done all my life. I have always placed some part of my happiness in some or other of the things that are seen. Particularly in meat and drink, and in the company of those I loved. For many years I have been, yea, and still am, hankering after a happiness, in loving, and being loved by one or another. And in these I have from time to time taken more pleasure than in God. "Again, joy in the Holy Ghost I have not. I have now and then some starts of joy in God: But it is not that joy. For it is not abiding. Neither is it greater than I have had on some worldly occasions. So that I can in no wise be said to 'rejoice evermore;' much less to 'rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.' "Yet again: I have not 'the peace of God;' that peace, peculiarly so called. The peace I have may be accounted for on natural principles. I have health, strength, friends, a competent fortune, and a composed, cheerful temper. Who would not have a sort of peace in such circumstances? But I have none which can with any propriety be called, a 'peace which passeth all understanding.' "From hence I conclude, (and let all the saints of the world hear, that whereinsoever they boast, they may be found even as I,) though I have given, and do give, all my goods to feed the poor, I am not a Christian. Though I have endured hardship, though I have in all things denied myself and taken up my cross, I am not a Christian. My works are nothing, my sufferings are nothing; I have not the fruits of the Spirit of Christ. Though I have constantly used all the means of grace for twenty years, I am not a Christian.)

If this is representative of the scholarship of Iain Murray, all of his claims must be carefully checked for fidelity.

Re: - posted by sojourner7 (), on: 2010/4/15 22:20

If we would rightly judge ourselves; then we would not be judged. The only way to rightly know Wesley is by the fruits of his ministry. Since he was mightily used of GOD, I would venture to say he was consecrated, devoted, and saved!!

Re: - posted by Giggles (), on: 2010/4/15 23:43

Just reading this thread title made me chuckle. For those pressing in, you know what I mean. Where's Neil? Amen my brother?

Re: , on: 2010/4/16 1:45

Thankyou Pilate, a sobering disclosure showing how careful we must be when so many are seeking to uphold their pet doctrines rather than search for the truth.

I think Wesley was basically an honest man....but confused. If you read his sermons before he went to America you can see that he was a believer, one cannot have that understanding of scripture otherwise, and how many unbelievers would go on mission where their lives would be in danger if all they had were notions?

Because of his contact with the Moravians, however, he knew that he was lacking something - which is a common reaction of honest men to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, who meet believers that actually are living the crucified life, and not those who only have aspirations. To desire to be holy is not the same as being holy and therefore displaying their detachment from the world, as did the Moravians. John was afraid because he still had not entered into the life in which the flesh is crucified, and unfortunately many believers are in the same state and therefore not saved.

This inspired him to avidly read the holiness writers on his return to seek the way of holiness taught by the early fathers, medieval Christian mystics and the early Quakers. For some reason, Wesley confused this teaching of the Via Triplex with the later teaching of the Second Blessing. I have not yet traced his source for the later which came to be known as Keswick teaching, if indeed he had one but nevertheless, he was not consistent.

The via Triplex view is that there are three stages known as purgation, illumination and finally union with Christ or glorification in this life as it is known in the scriptures which is also sometimes called entire sanctification 1Thes 5:23 for those

who deny it, as the state is one of sinless perfection (sadly many today are proud to say they are not perfect even though the scriptures commands it.)

Between stages one, two and three there are `dark nights` of intense suffering for those who venture on this path. I believe that John had gained the illumination stage yet believed he was in union, as many do who dwell there and taught others likewise but the reality of that stage is however, the lack of the power to live without sin (man cannot do this with his own strength).

Here is the reason why sinless perfection, which does not teach that man can never sin again, but DOES teach that in that state one will not sin unless one falls from it, has a bad name - those who are claiming perfection are not perfected. Even though we see that Murray was wrong in what he said, due to careless scholarship or worse, Wesley did in fact have struggles. He did not feel the union and therefore have assurance that he was walking in the fullness of the new life nor did he have the discernment.

This must be the source of our own assurance - the inward witness of the Spirit. If we do not have it then we are not saved, and saved means scripturally saved from sin no matter how hard we try mentally to assure ourselves - it means nothing. The truth is in the witness of the Spirit and it is far better to be distressed with the truth than to blindly go on in false assurance. Those who sin belong to their father the devil as Christ came to destroy his works so that man can be restored to what he fell from.

Baptism saves us (Spirit) that is, but if the assurance is not there then we need to question the experience where we have falsely placed our trust even though we read scriptures to falsely quell our hearts. Scripture is only the truth when the inward Light confirms it as truth for us.

I heard that John did actually attain union later on in his life but have not had a good source yet.

blessings
Brenda

Re: - posted by elected (), on: 2010/4/16 5:36

Quote:
-----As to understanding the ins-and-outs of Wesley's theology, I cannot recommend enough the writings of Kenneth J. Collins. I've yet to come across a writer with a better grasp of Wesley's theology, especially as it changed over time. As to Wesley's "doubts," I think one could liken them to the bi-polar nature of David Brainerd in his experience with God. As Wesley was ever the practical theologian, his understanding of "the witness" of the Spirit was something he wanted to experience every moment of every day.

I agree with you Jimmy. Wesley theology was living and practical, something he had to experience in his heart by the Holy Spirit. As Luther was used by God to rediscover the biblical doctrine of justification by faith, so was Wesley used of God to rediscover sanctification by faith. Wesley did not teach sanctification by works but he did encourage more than any other in his times the means of grace.

Jesus well said judge the prophet by its fruits. Wesley when persecuted and beaten by his enemies blessed and loved them, that's a fruit - loving your enemies, supernatural love. When his wife dragged him down the stairs pulling him from his hair, he did not use force but bravely suffered humiliation - that's another fruit, "giving the other cheek", non violence.

These are only few of many examples of practical application of the sermon on the mount. Wesley and many godly methodists of his time, were a living illustration of the teachings of Jesus.

I just don't understand the lack of spiritual insight so prevailing with us believers. Because a brother does not fit in our theological camp, we will come up with our prejudices and ignore the facts that speak for themselves about the life of the man. I really don't care if I was a Calvinist or Arminian as long as I had the saintly character of someone like David Brainerd (Calvinist) or John Fletcher (Arminian). What matters is the reality of Jesus Christ in my life, not a dead theology.

I hope we don't become revisionists and rewrite past history of men of God and make them appear what they never were. Some people need to clear off the fog to see better the spiritual reality.

The doctrine of christian perfection according to Wesley if im not wrong was a perfection in holy love. Can we love God with all of our hearts? By the grace of God we can. Can we love men as we love ourselves, by the grace of God we can. Those early methodists like the primitive christians are a living prove of that. If any one thinks that Wesley was inventing the doctrine of perfection he's wrong, the early church fathers taught that, and they were not afraid of the term. This doctrine it has been there in the church since the apostolic times.

Can someone stop sinning and overcome sin? by the grace of God and the power of the blood he can. Can someone stop hating even his enemies? Yes, by the grace of God its possible, otherwise the commandment to love your enemies is impossible for christians and Jesus would have been a liar. Jesus is the truth, and he knew that by the power of the cross and the Holy Spirit a man who believed in Him and obeys him will love unconditionally, because he is a new man in the likeness of Jesus.

L.E.Maxwell in his book, Born Crucified wrote:

Some christians have been frightened by the fanatical extremes of the perfectionism. Their fears are not without foundation. However we commend to the reader the wise words of Dr. A. J. Gordon:

(Divine truth as revealed in scripture seems often to be between two extremes. If we regard the doctrine of the sinless perfection as a heresy, we regard contentment with sinful imperfection as a greater heresy. And we gravely fear that many Christians make the apostles words, "If we say that we have not sin, we deceive ourselves," the unconscience justification for a low standard of Christian living. It were almost better for one to overstate the possibilities of sanctification in his eager grasp after holiness, than to understate them in his complacent satisfaction with a traditional unholiness. certainly it is not an edifying spectacle to see a Christian worldlying throwing stones at a Christian perfectionist).

I dont claim to have the experience of the perfect love that casts out fear but i desire it, because pure love is what matters, without it we are nothing.

I have a question for the my calvinist brothers, How much effective is the blood of Jesus that was shed on the cross to cleanse us of sin and unrighteousness?

I really looking for an honest answer, we are talking about the cross, the redemption and how effective they can be against present sin in the believer.

Many old saints with imperfect theology had pure hearts, pure love and holy life, be they puritans, pietists, revivalists. Jesus was their all in all, their sufficiency, their perfection, their holiness, their source of divine life.

Blessings,

Redi

Re: - posted by ADisciple (), on: 2010/4/16 19:09

Quote:
-----{John Wesley's journal entry, Mon . January 1, 1739. Â— Mr. Hall, Kinchin, Ingham, Whitefield, Hatchins, and my brother Charles, were present at our love-feast in Fetter-Lane, with about sixty of our brethren. About three in the morning, as we were continuing constant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, in so much that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground. As soon as we were recovered a little from that awe and amazement at the presence of his Majesty, we broke out with one voice, Â“We praise thee, O God; we acknowledge thee to be the Lord.Â”

In this whole thread, this is the thing that moved me!

How can we, why DO we, carry on without HIM?

Quote:
-----About three in the morning, as we were continuing constant in prayer, the power of God came mightily upon us, in so much that many cried out for exceeding joy, and many fell to the ground.

...Cried out for exceeding JOY... and fell to the ground!

Oh, we need to repent!

And NOTE WELL: Both Wesley AND Whitfield were there at the time!

...What does God know that we don't?

Re: - posted by nasekom (), on: 2010/4/16 22:05

i believe John Wesley, that man of God, was saved.

Oh, Giggles! , on: 2010/4/16 23:31

we've never met, but you know my reaction to something so well.

you wrote:

"Just reading this thread title made me chuckle. For those pressing in, you know what I mean. Where's Neil? Amen my brother?"

amen! the title made me roll my eyes, and think "oh no, please". Then i read my dear Greg's post, and he hit the mark, he pinged right in, to the Moravian's. I read Greg, see where he's "going", where his mind and spirit are taking him, and we both are uplifted by similar histories. I'm fascinated and have a Godly envy of the Moravians, something really Special happened at Hernhut...they got the right end of the stick, and Wesley picked up on that...

...and then i started to think about Greg, after i read your call out to me. Do you know what i appreciate about my brother, he's real. That's what i look for in fellow followers of Messiah....look at it, early twenties, he's gets a vision from the Lord, redeem the internet, open a website, a repository for sermons ON REVIVAL, that is a job in itself, no support, no demoni national covering, but he does it...then by the Grace of God, the website attracts PEOPLE, downloading thousands of sermons, and we have no idea this side Heaven, how that impacted people, changed lives....fast forward, people now start to come at Greg,....come speak, here there, well meaning people complimenting him, praising him, praise, compliments, "annointed" this, "holy" that...."what a great thing you've done, Greg" etc etc etc etc etc...and what does Greg do?

Thru the Indwelling Holy Ghost, Greg spots the trap of the devil, which is pride, and publically repents ON THIS FORUM, and turns from that trap, i see it, i read his words, i pray for him, and i love and respect my brother, for what he has done, and God willing what he will do, may God the Holy Ghost guard his heart from the wiles and the fiery darts of the enemy and the weakness of our flesh.

My only regret is that i don't have the resource, yet, to quietly pour into this ministry. Brother Greg, if you read this, forgive me for speaking for and about you, but rest assured, i am laboring in my tent-making, to make this possible, because what i concentrate on, IN THE CHURCH, that is the Body of Christ, those people, those ministries, that are pure, lovely, praiseworthy, and real, you at SI, Patrick Ersig at the Jonah Project, my "home" Church, and two missionaries unnamed in sensitive parts of the world, who i love dearly, and they labor quietly.

That's why i'm so positively weary, tired, grief-stricken about the constant stream of palaver about the "apostates", the tearing down of this one and that one, the "wall watchers", is this one saved?..OR NOT, etc etc etc...the religious arguments, about this doctrine and that doctrine...instead, myself, i want to gaze upon Jesus, Ressurrected, and those who reflect that Light in their walk, and the ministries God has entrusted them with. amen to that.

That's why i personally know more about David Brainerd, a lonely struggling, TB wracked twenty something missionary who preached to the Indians in what is now NJ, circa 1740's than I do Wesley. Nothing against Wesley, no, but it's Brainerd

nerd's life that makes my heart sing, and God took him at 29, and I thank Jesus that Jonathan Edwards was able to convince a dying David to let his private journals be published. So even though David slipped his mortal coil almost 260 years ago, thru Christ, thru the Mercy of God, he lives on, because his witness LIVES ON, his walk with Jesus is an example to any lonely struggling tzzadik.

Same with John Sung, arguably one of the main "fathers" of the Chinese "house Church", though persecuted mightily, grows, and is vibrant TODAY. John Sung suffered as David Brainerd did thru a thorn in his side also, intestinal TB in his case, died in his early 40's, but praise be to God, he left his journals! God is good.

i see darkness all around me in this filthy, vain, greedy, selfish, bloody, murderous dying world, why can't followers of Jesus be different?, why cant we be of one accord, Sons and Daughters of Abraham, followers of Jesus Messiah Ressurected?

Why can't we? Why wallow in brittle religiosity, and vain arguments over dashes and iotas? Time is short.

neil