

# WORD - SUNDAY 19<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2020

“BEING SURE OF BELONGING AND BEING SAVED”

I hope you have had the chance to look at and meditate on the verses published the day before this talk... if not see at the end here!

Our current position as Christians is that Christ died for use on the cross that He might pay the price for our forgiveness, redeems our lives, heals all our diseases, crowns you with love and compassion and who satisfies your desires with good things..... Psalm 103:2-5

This subject is so important that it is a theme running through the whole Bible and indeed one whole book of the Bible is devoted to this question - 1 John!

We also have a provision for the mistakes and wrong and selfish things we do each day – 1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”.

But I hear some people say “what about really bad and/or really persistent mistakes and “sins””? Some churches and denominations have in the past taught, with the best of intentions, that it was possible for a Christian to lose their place in God’s Family..... there are ways of backing up this idea by taking some verses of the Bible in isolation – for instance:

- Jesus Himself said in Matthew 12:31, “Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men.” But it says men not necessarily “Christians” and do we know what this is? Jesus indicates this is cursing God or His Spirit and His work — Yet many folks including myself have done this many times in the past and we’re here now! So does it refer to people who harden their hearts and never turn to God?
- Others say sin that a person clings to by continually resisting the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. Keep in mind that there is not one specific sin [mentioned in the Bible] that is unforgivable, such as lying stealing or murder, but rather a perpetual hardening of the heart and wilfully sinning against God and man ([www.bibleinfo.com](http://www.bibleinfo.com)). But again is this anyone or specifically Christians that “go wrong”? Paul described himself thus – but rejoiced at the “second chance” God had given him!

*1 Timothy 1:13-15 = “Although I [Paul] was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor (of the Holy Spirit’s work), and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.”*

- According to Billy Graham, “refusing to turn to God and accept his forgiveness” is the eternal sin
- Take the story of the Prodigal Son (Daughter) ...could he have done much worse from a Jewish cultural perspective? yet the Father watched out from a window for him every day hoping to see him and ran to greet him and hugged him BEFORE HE COULD GET THE WORDS “I’m so sorry” out
- Then there is the other main difficult text Hebrews 6:4-6  
“It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

Does this mean though it is impossible for Paul and the church leaders to restore them to the church or God to the heavenly family and if so when did they exactly leave it? (because there are no so far away

from God seemingly) – because repentance is the work of the Holy Spirit not man..... but until then they are breaking God’s heart and this is described dramatically as “crucifying the Son of God all over again”

But in the context of what Paul was saying – verses before the main point is we should press onto maturity (literally perfection) not look back – then see a few verses later “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure” v 19. The warning to leave you with on this point is “don’t persistently harden your heart...because you yourself may find it hard to turn back to God with your own freewill – in effect saying Jesus’s crucifixion was worthless and that the world has something better to offer than God ([www.desiringgod.org](http://www.desiringgod.org)).

CLEARLY MOST OF SCRIPTURE SHOWS THAT GOD IS GOOD AND OUR FORGIVENESS IS BASED ON JESUS’S SACRIFICE ON THE CROSS. Jesus’s work was “once for all” If we couldn’t “do” our forgiveness is it logical that we can (by our own actions) “undo” it??

Struggle with relying on God’s Word not Feelings for confidence in God’s salvation is COMMON and EVERY CHRISTIAN GOES THROUGH IT Doubts are Good! Questions are Good – story of Jesus and Thomas for example

Persistent fear is NOT! A spiritually troubled and fearful nature is the enemy trying to undo a person! The enemy knows the easiest place to disable a potentially powerful, loved and loving, world changing Christian is to get them at an early stage when they are new – before they get over the first few hurdles in their spiritual life and gain strength, faith and confidence.....

Yes there are difficult verses but let’s look at these we have published earlier.....

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”

2 Corinthians 5:17

*God is the Creator – this is His doing not yours!*

“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.”

1 John 5:11-13

*God offers a gift of belonging - having an experience of Jesus and who has this has life*

“He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit”

Titus 3:5

*This rebirth and renewal is not something we can do ourselves*

“Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life”

John 5:24

“All those the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away”

John 6:37

*In fact the opposite is true God pursues us when we are far away and feel distant – He does not drive us away – story of Jonah – in the Old Testament – check it out*

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand”

John 10:27-29

*We are secure we can’t be snatched away – we are safe from all evil*

“Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have graven you on the palm of my hands”

Isaiah 49:15

*This is how incredibly committed God is to us – we sometimes take a ballpen to write something vital on our hands – God carves it and it cannot be uncarved easily if at all ever*

“Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God”

John 1:12-13

Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again”

John 3:3

*Becoming a Christian is a completely new start a new life not something that can easily be undone!!*

WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT TO SORT THIS ISSUE OUT AND RELY ON BELEIVING GOD’S WORD NOT DARK THOUGHTS AND INSECURE FEELINGS?

1. We need to be secure, certain and happy not constantly looking over our shoulders – following Jesus demands all our time, resources and energy – keep up or we might lag behind – but we know the Good Shepherd will come looking for us of course (John 10)
  
2. We need to know God’s Grace and adopt a whole lifestyle of experiencing God being in the “driving seat of our lives” rather than back in our garage wondering if the keys will work and whether God knows how to drive (!):
  - a. God forgiving us
  - b. God providing for us
  - c. God protecting us
  - d. God leading us

3. We need to GROW and move on – the work of forgiveness is a foundation no even a cornerstone:

Isaiah 28:16

Therefore the Lord GOD says this, “Listen carefully, I am laying in Zion a Stone, a tested Stone, A precious Cornerstone for the [secure] foundation, firmly placed. He who believes [who trusts in, relies on, and adheres to that Stone] will not be disturbed *or* give way [in sudden panic].

4. We need to be clear and certain of our message to people who don’t know Jesus:

But in your hearts set Christ apart [as holy—acknowledging Him, giving Him first place in your lives] as Lord. Always be ready to give a [logical] defence to anyone who asks you to account for the hope and confident assurance [elicited by faith] that is within you, yet [do it] with gentleness and respect. 1 PETER 3:15 - Amplified Version

5. For our longer term peace and happiness we need to know how God’s Grace works and how much He loves us

2 Corinthians 9:8 NIV

And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

6. We need to (Psalm 103) know for certain with faith that it is God's plan to heal us and heal others

*Bless and affectionately praise the LORD, O my soul,  
And do not forget any of His benefits;  
Who forgives all your sins,  
Who heals all your diseases;  
Who redeems your life from the pit,  
Who crowns you [lavishly] with lovingkindness and tender mercy;  
Who satisfies your years with good things,  
So that your youth is renewed like the [soaring] eagle.*

7. Ditto bring deliverance and freedom and victory in spiritual warfare and we can know He will hear our prayers

Please do check out our video page (up to 20 items for your encouragement) on our main website:

[www.portsmouthvineyard.org/recent](http://www.portsmouthvineyard.org/recent)