

BELIEVING, BUT NOT UNDERSTANDING

A Paper

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Believing, But Not Understanding

Bob Wilkin says that in order for a lost person to be saved, they must interpret the phrase “eternal life” to mean specifically “eternal security”.[1] This is the correct interpretation and understanding of “eternal life” according to Bob Wilkin. But besides the fact that he is turning the *result* of saving faith into the *required content* of that faith, there is another glaring problem with Wilkin’s reasoning. As Lewis Sperry Chafer has said, “The man who refuses to believe anything that he does not understand will have a very short creed”![2] Wilkin’s attitude in regards to understanding eternal security up front for salvation reminds me of the three young men in the following story, which illustrates the point well:

‘I will not believe anything but what I understand,’ said a self-confident young man in a hotel one day.

‘Nor will I,’ said another.

‘Neither will I,’ chimed in a third.

‘Gentlemen,’ said one well known to me, who was on a journey, and who sat close by, ‘do I understand you correctly, that you will not believe anything that you don’t understand?’

‘I will not,’ said one, and so said each one of the trio.

‘Well,’ said the stranger, “in my ride this morning I saw some geese in a field eating grass; do you believe that?’

‘Certainly,’ said the three unbelievers.

‘I also saw the pigs eating grass; do you believe that?’

‘Of course,’ said the three.

‘And I also saw sheep and cows eating grass; do you believe that?’

‘Of course,’ was again replied.

‘Well, but the grass which they had formerly eaten, had, by digestion, turned to feathers on the backs of geese, to bristles on the backs of swine, to wool on the sheep, and on the cows it had turned to hair; do you believe that, gentlemen?’

‘Certainly,’ they replied.

‘Yes, you *believe it*,’ he rejoined, ‘BUT DO YOU UNDERSTAND IT?’

They were confounded and silent, and evidently ashamed, as they well might be.”[3]

A lost person can *believe* the words of Jesus that “whosoever believes in Me should not perish, but have eternal life” (Jn. 3:16) without fully understanding the concept of “eternal life”, much less interpreting it as specifically “eternal security”! If a man is drowning and I throw him a life raft, assuring him that I will pull him to safety if he grabs hold of it, must the drowning person understand the intricacies of the life raft’s design and how it floats, or does he simply trust the person to save him? Wilkin is essentially making understanding the life raft a requirement to be saved, when Jesus says rather to simply “believe in HIM” – that is, to simply believe in His person and work!

ENDNOTES:

[1] See the Grace Evangelical Society's "Affirmations of Belief" web page under the heading "What We Believe – Fuller Statement", where it says the under the sub-heading "Assurance of Salvation": "Assurance is of the essence of saving faith. That is, *if a person has never been sure that he personally is eternally secure by faith alone, then he has never been regenerated.* Assurance is always present at the moment of saving faith, though it is possible that a Christian may later doubt his salvation." ("Affirmations of Belief," emphasis added. <https://faithalone.org/beliefs/>) *Note:* Bob Wilkin is the founder and Executive Director of the Grace Evangelical Society.

[2] Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas Theological Seminary, 1947), vol. 1, p. 75.

[3] "Believing, But Not Understanding," *Good News*, November 2, 1868, no page number. www.google.com/books/edition/Good_news/wBoFAAAAQAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=&pg=PP321&printsec=frontcover (accessed January 4, 2023).