

IRRELEVANCE

BY: BRAD CULLEN – MARCH 30, 2004

I have been playing with a thought in my mind for several days. The thought is how to prove that both sides of an argument are ridiculous. An example of just how seriously the combatants take the argument is the fact that there are two million, two hundred and ninety thousand pages on the more popular Internet search engines devoted to both sides of this argument!

Typically, since the battle lines are drawn between two major Protestant Christian groups, both sides hurl volleys of Bible references at the other to support their respective positions.

The top two pages define the argument clearly. Number one, states in bold capitals that the doctrine "IS WRONG" – and that followed by a sentence that says:

"There's so much scriptural proof that this doctrine is wrong it's best to put it in these separate pages..." -- then come the myriad Bible references.

Number two, in the list (again, in the total of 2,290,000 web pages listed), takes the pro stance with its own set of scripture references.

The third web page in this long list has in its title the question, "is this doctrine a dangerous delusion?" With its own set of Bible verses ostensibly proving that the tenet is delusional.

The fourth web page is by a Christian author well known for his logical approach to such matters -- he lines up on the pro side of the argument and poses this little gem:

Thus those who reject "_____ " can only replace it with "_____!" (The exact opposite). His arguments are lucid and logical and, in my view, exceptionally well written and so what? – It is fair (I suppose) to note that it was the fourth or fifth paragraph before this writer started lacing his argument with Bible references, which from then on he uses with some regularity.

I don't know how evenly divided on the pro or con side the remaining 2,289,996 web pages are – but these four give us a start in realizing just how heavily invested are both the proponents and the opponents of this doctrine.

Since the positions are clearly opposite from one another, at least according to the argument, one logical observation would seem to be that both sides couldn't possibly be correct. As one who is not so heavily invested in arguments for or against – is it fair to ask if both sides haven't proven the obvious irrelevance of the whole topic?

I'm thinking about something Jesus said, "By your many traditions you have rendered God's word invalid." In the instance of this particular doctrine it could be fairly stated that the combatants have rendered the Bible irrelevant! Now isn't that a sad note. Or is it?

Anyone that reads my treatises knows that I constantly make references to what the Bible says – particularly in the original languages – therefore I hardly believe the Bible is irrelevant so that's not my point, but then let's look at some ways that it can be rendered totally irrelevant.

My point is that two major Christian denominations both that make the statement to the effect that the Bible is the, "word of God," and use passages in the Bible to prove that their existence is valid and therefore "obviously" have the blessings of God. Each of these takes serious exception to the other's view based on their interpretation of certain scriptures and each obviously avoid the passages that would seem to refute their own position. I am about to reveal this doctrine and state unequivocally that it is only one of many such almost violent (at least verbally) points of difference – that in my view are irrelevant.

Before we reveal the actual doctrine as stated in the above referenced search engines (you can find the same data at www.searchalot.com or www.google.com), let's look at two large denominations that make this a major issue as published in their own literature: The many varieties of Baptists take the "pro" position along with various other denominations and the many varieties of Pentecostals along with other denominations take the opposing position.

I take the position that the doctrine and the opposing argument are both irrelevant! I am also willing to reiterate something Jesus said – I didn't say it – put those stones DOWN! Jesus said the following to a rather large group of religionists of his day that had tendencies amazingly similar to the above referenced two groups:

"You read the Scriptures over and over trying to find in them the answers for eternal life, and what you fail to realize is that they point to me. Yet you refuse to come to me to receive that life."

Here's a paraphrase of what Jesus said in the foregoing, "You keep on making arguments based on the Scriptures and these arguments and the Scriptures you use are leading you away from me and away from eternal life." Isn't it fair to say that's at least one way of looking at what he said?

What is the doctrine? The technical name is the "doctrine of eternal security" the phrase used by those quoted on the search engines is "Once saved always saved."

Let's digress for a moment. The term in the original language translated as, "eternal life," doesn't mean "eternal life" in the way that either side of the "eternal security" doctrine use the term. Most people have the understanding that "eternal life" means going to heaven after one dies. In fact, my wife recently attended an after-church luncheon during which the church representative assigned to her table brought up membership in that church. She easily sidestepped the implied suggestion by telling him that she was just visiting the area for the winter. He then asked her if she was sure of going to heaven after she died and she assured him that she was.

The term in the original language means no beginning as well as no ending. Precisely, the term means this moment, NOW. Jesus was not talking about believing something that would prepare us for heaven after we die; Jesus was talking about entering the realm of the kingdom of God NOW. Further, Jesus said that anyone entering that quality of life in the unseen realm of spirit would NEVER die. Death is abolished! Yet here we have a large portion of Christianity focusing on death when Jesus was talking about vibrant LIFE in the NOW, this moment! "God is not a God of the dead, but of the living." How does that get so readily overlooked?

Of course this takes us back to something mentioned earlier. Again, Jesus' words: "By your many religious traditions you have made the word of God invalid."

I love to tell a true story that bypasses this ludicrous argument over an irrelevant Christian doctrine – "once saved always saved" or the opposite. Oops let's also deal with the word in the original language translated as "saved." That original word renders another silly argument as moot. Since the word in the original language doesn't mean, "saved" in the sense it is used in the subject doctrine, the throw away argument, "saved from what," is meaningless. The word means, "repaired" or "joined together again." Paired up with God AGAIN! In context it means joined together again with God, a far different connotation! Okay back to the true story.

A friend of mine asked me if I would meet with someone that was resistant to Christianity. I jokingly told him that I was resistant to Christianity as well. He said, "You know what I mean. I have a hard time telling him about Jesus Christ because he is so opposed to anything Christian."

The upshot was that he arranged a meeting with this businessman with whom he wanted me to talk about Jesus Christ. The man turned out to be an avowed atheist! His salutation upon being introduced to me was, "I suppose you are one of these 'born again' Christians." Before I had a chance to respond he added, "The only time I have ever been screwed in business is by 'born again' Christians."

I told him that was why I had difficulty with people that referred to themselves as “born again” even though it was a legitimate term to which Jesus made reference. “Rather than get off on all that,” I said, “which just proves what we all know – some religious people don’t live up to what they say – the real key is to ask Jesus Christ if he is real. He’s alive and he is here with us right now.”

An amazing transformation took place as this avowed atheist literally yelled, “Jesus Christ, if you are real, show me. I need help!”

The question of eternal security is bypassed – and here is how and why. This man invited the person of Jesus Christ to take over his life. He understood more quickly than anyone I have ever previously known that Jesus Christ was indeed in him and always available. Since he was an atheist he wasn’t bound by Christian traditions so his leap into a relationship with Jesus Christ was immediate.

Instead of arguing about or even discussing, “eternal security,” here’s a bit of Scripture that makes that precept totally irrelevant. “Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and will have intimate fellowship with him or her.”

What is amazing to me about this particular passage is that it is Jesus providing an antidote to the “sin” of the church at Laodicea, that of spiritual lukewarm-ness. A condition brought on by the religious thinking they are spiritually wealthy and in need of nothing when Jesus is saying that they are pitiful, poor, naked and blind.

I suppose you could say that might represent those who focus on being “eternally secure.” I’m not saying that, and I want to quickly point out that arguing that it is impossible to be “eternally secure” seems to lead to a bunch of false religious standards that result in the same kind of spiritual lukewarm-ness – it just happens to be on the other side of the same religious coin. Why on earth get so engrossed in irrelevance?

Hey Jesus, are you real? If you ARE real, take over my life now. I don’t want to be hung up on religious doctrines or reading the Bible or going to church or whatever – I want you to take over my life NOW!

For me, I have found this to be the way to move from lukewarm religious nonsense into the presence and power of God’s own Spirit in a continuum. Want to discuss eternal security? Go discuss it with somebody else - I’m meeting with Jesus Christ at the moment.

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