

HOW DO I KNOW THAT I AM SAVED?

"These things I wrote to you (have I written unto you) who believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life." I John 5:13.

The gospel according to John was written to teach lost men how to be saved. "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." John 20:31. The first epistle of John was written to teach saved men how they may know they are saved. God's Word deals with men and women strictly upon this basis, as to whether they are unbelievers or believers, lost or saved. Nationality, race, intellectual attainment, social standing, financial achievement, etc., have nothing to do with these matters.

On this question of assurance of salvation there are two extreme positions. One extreme is held by people who say that there can be no such thing as definite assurance. The other is held by people who say that it is impossible for one to be a Christian without knowing it. They say that regeneration is such a revolutionary experience that no one could go through it without having a knowledge of the fact. If that be true then John wrote in vain. What use is there for John to write that men may know if they already know?

However, John said that one can know! He said that he wrote to inform the believer that it was possible for him to know that he had eternal life. And the word that he used for "know" is a strong word—one that means to know clearly and unmistakably. Our text says, then, that he is writing that they might know of a certainty that they have eternal life. Now if it is impossible for one to know that he is saved, then John wrote in vain. He was simply wasting his time and energy if he was trying to give men that which was impossible for them to have. On the other hand, John wrote in vain if all believers were already certain that they were saved. There was no occasion for him sending them information which they already possessed.

In this letter, John writes to those who believe on the name of the Son of God. It is for all who trust in Christ, but for no others. It is written in order that those who believe may know that they have eternal life. John assumes, then, that one may know, that it is his privilege to know; but he also assumes that one may be a believer and not know for a certainty that he is saved.

The note of assurance is one of the strongest notes in the New Testament religion. It was a religion of strong and conquering joy. The note of certainty sounded in it like the note of a bugle blast. This assurance is in striking contrast to the uncertainty and lack of assurance which many professed Christians have today. If you should ask many professed Christians, "Have you been saved?", they will answer, "I reckon so," or "I am trying to be." If you should ask them, "Are you a child of God?" many will reply, "I hope so." Some will even go so far as to say, "One cannot know for sure that he is saved until the Judgment Day." But, either one can know whether or not he is saved or the first epistle of John was written in vain. According to our text, as well as various other scriptures, one can know that he is saved. How we do need the note of New Testament certainty in our religion today! We need the note of certainty growing out of an experience of God's grace. One certainly will not have power or joy in his religious life as long as he is asking: "Am I His or am I not?" How can one recommend to others a Saviour whom he is not certain that he knows himself?

There are those who think that it is presumptuous for us to claim absolute assurance of salvation. But since it is taught in the Scriptures and since it means so much to the Christian's life and service it seems exceedingly important that every Christian should enjoy the assurance of salvation. Surely something is radically wrong when people can be churchgoers all their lives and never get farther than to live in hope of receiving "dying grace" at last. The Thessalonian believers did not have to wait until facing death in order to enter into the positive knowledge of sins forgiven. In Isaiah 32:17 there appears

the expression "assurance for ever." Isn't that a wonderfully pleasing expression? Assurance, not for a few days, or weeks, or months, or years, or even a lifetime, but forever! It is this blessed assurance that God delights to impart to all who come to Him as needy sinners seeking the way of life. The very moment one takes God at His Word and trusts the Lord Jesus as a personal Saviour, that one has eternal life, and that one may know it on the authority of the Holy Scriptures.

When Queen Victoria, so long ruler of Britain's vast empire, occupied her castle at Balmoral, Scotland, she was in the habit of calling, in a friendly way, upon certain cottagers living in the neighborhood. One aged Highland woman, who felt greatly honored by these visits and who knew the Lord, was anxious about the soul of the queen. As the season came to a close one year, her Majesty was making her last visit to the humble home of this dear child of God. After the good-byes were said, the old cottager timidly said, "May I ask your gracious Majesty a question?" "Yes," replied the queen, "as many as you like." "Will your Majesty meet me in heaven?" Instantly the royal visitor replied, "I will, through the all-availing blood of Jesus Christ." That is the only safe ground for assurance. The blood shed on Calvary avails for all classes alike.

The expression "full assurance" occurs three times in the Epistles. "The full assurance of faith," (Hebrews 10:22) the confidence of a believer that he is saved; "the full assurance of understanding," (Colossians 2:2) the confidence of an instructed believer who knows how he is saved; and "the full assurance of hope," (Hebrews 6:11) the confidence of a believer that he will be kept to the end. Concerning this full assurance of salvation on the part of the believer, allow me to say that:

1. It is possible to have it.
That one may know whether or not he is saved is clearly taught in the Bible. "Ye may know that ye have eternal life."
2. It is a privilege to have it.
No Christian is living up to his highest privileges and opportunities who does not have this assurance.
3. It is a duty to have it.
No Christian can render his largest service nor win souls to Christ who is himself living in doubt and uncertainty about his own salvation. Perhaps this explains why the great majority of our church members are so indifferent and negligent about winning souls to Christ. Since they are not sure of their own salvation there is no reason why they should be concerned about getting somebody else into the same plight. One who is in doubt about his own salvation will not be a useful and effective Christian.
4. It is a tragedy not to have it.
One is either saved or lost. He is either a child of God or a child of the devil. He is either on his way to heaven or on his way to hell. There is no middle ground and he ought to know on which side of the line he stands. It is certainly a tragedy if he does not know.

Can a person know that he has been saved, that he is a child of God and that he is a possessor of eternal life? Can a believer "read his title clear to mansions in the skies"? Can one truthfully say, "I know that I am saved and will spend eternity in heaven?" Certainly! God wants us to know that we are saved. What then are some of the evidences that one is a child of God?

I. A Consciousness Of Faith In Christ.

"Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God." I John 5:1. By believing he does not mean simply an intellectual acceptance of a doctrine, but the heartfelt response of one's whole being to Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. It

means that he feels the need of a divine Saviour, that he believes Christ to be God's Son and able to save all that come unto God by Him. It also means that he has a consciousness of yielding to Christ, of casting himself upon Christ as his only hope, of trusting Him for salvation. The Bible says that if we believe on Christ we shall be saved.

II. The Testimony Of The Scriptures.

"And by Him every one that believeth is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." Acts 13:39. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name." John 1:12. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand." John 10:27-28. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." I John 5:12-13.

We believe the witness of men--what men say--, and therefore should believe even more the witness of God. And this is God's witness, that if we believe on His Son, trust the Lord Jesus Christ, we have eternal life. If we believe this witness of God that is recorded in the Bible, then we know we are saved. We can know we are saved because the Bible says we are saved if we trust the Lord Jesus as our Saviour.

Do you believe on Jesus as your personal Saviour? Then don't let the devil ever make you doubt your salvation for "he that believeth on the Son of God hath eternal life." God said it, and it is so!

Do you, in your own heart, believe on Christ as your Saviour? If so, God says that you are saved. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John 3:36. God's Word is unchangeably true. If you believe on Christ, you may know that you are saved because God's Word says that you are. Surely if the One who saved us said He did it, we ought to believe Him. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." John 5:24. It is a very strange thing that people would not know whether they believe on Christ or not, for it is an ascertainable piece of knowledge. I know whether or not I think, I doubt or I resolve; therefore, I ought to know whether or not I believe on Christ.

III. The Testimony Of The Spirit Of God.

"The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God." Romans 8:16.

IV. A Desire To Please The Lord.

John emphasizes this by saying, "And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." I John 2:3. He goes on to say in the next verse that, "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." That is very plain language, but not too plain. A man can easily enough stand up in meeting and say, "Yes, I know the Lord." But the test comes when he leaves the meeting. What does he do then? Does his life on the outside conform to his talk inside the meeting? Something is wrong when life and talk do not agree. Practice is what counts, not profession.

A saved man submits to Christ's will, makes Him the supreme object of his affections, and endeavors to do the things that will please Him. The saved man has a disposition

to keep the commandments of Christ and to abhor sin in thought, word and deed. He yearns to be more like Him in character, and to please Him in his conduct. If you have a yearning to cheerfully do the will of Christ in your life you may know that you have been saved. It is not natural for the unbeliever to delight in the will of the Lord.

V. A Love For Others.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." I John 3:14. This love is not the empty effervescence of animal desire, but the pure flame of an ardent affection which expresses itself in thoughtfulness, sympathy, helpfulness, cooperation, and service. There is a difference between the love here spoken of and a merely human affection. The word used here designates a love that is divinely imparted. It is implanted in us when we are born again. Love characterizes God's children; hatred characterizes the children of Satan.

Love for fellow-Christians proves that one is a child of God. Love for the brethren is an inevitable result of salvation. If you are saved, there is sure to be some of the family affection in your heart. Your love for others will be expressed by thoughtfulness, sympathy, helpfulness and service.

VI. A Victory Over Sin.

"For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." I John 5:4. In I John 3:9 the author uses the present tense of the verb to sin, which denotes not a single act, but a course or habit of life. He says that a regenerated person does not live a habitual life of sin. It is not a question of occasional, or even of frequent failure, bitterly lamented and grieved over. It rather implies a course of behavior that is characteristic. God has made no provision for His children to be overcome by the demon of temptation, the siren of the world, and the whirlpool of the flesh.

We only deceive ourselves if we say that we do not sin. We do not deceive others. We certainly do not deceive God for He made us and knows all about us. We do not deceive Satan because he is after us. But a man can argue with himself and win, no matter which side of the question he takes. One who claims to be living a perfect life in this world needs only to be asked the question, "Does God ever chastise you?" This will force him to put his head in the noose of a dilemma from which there is no escape. If he answers, "Yes, God chastises me," this would admit his sin because God would not chastise one who had done no wrong. If he answers, "No!," then Hebrews 12:8 says, "If ye be without chastisement ye are bastards and not sons." In one case he would be a sinner, but saved by grace. In the other case he would be a sinner who had never been saved at all.

VII. A Passion For The Lost.

The highest achievement possible is to bring a soul to Christ. That should be our supreme ambition. A saved person longs for the salvation of others and labors to that end.

With these evidences in mind, test yourself. Come into the life of privilege. If you are a Christian it is your privilege to know that you are saved and rejoice in the fact and get the new zest and energy that comes from the glorious assurance of salvation.