

“Can I Know For Certain That I’m Saved?”

Yes!

When the believers in the early church were having their faith attacked by their detractors, and their many trials were causing them to have doubts themselves, the Holy Spirit guided the apostle John to write to them to build up their precious faith and strengthen them. He concluded his letter of gentle instruction with these words of encouragement:

“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...” 1 John 5:13. (underline added for emphasis)

When we love someone, we want the best God has for him; we want him to be saved and enjoy the peace of God’s full assurance of his salvation. But, in the end, only he and the Lord can come to the full knowledge of that assurance.

While we can’t give absolute assurance to another, we can, like Peter, be used of the Lord to exhort one another to “make your calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10). And with Paul we can lovingly encourage one another to “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates [i.e., unapproved]” (2 Corinthians 13:5)?

God loves His children. If you are a true Believer, He wants you to have full assurance that you are saved, to enjoy His peace “which passeth all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). So that you might be sure, He has provided the following evidences of saving faith in John’s first letter to the early church. The following outline is an adaptation of these evidences as beautifully expounded by Steve Lawson in his book Absolutely Sure (Multnomah Publishers, Sisters, Oregon).

If you have truly been born again by the work of God’s Holy Spirit, you will

1. Desire communion, i.e., intimate fellowship, with Christ
(1 John 1:1-4)

The Lord is more than a “power,” or “force” in the true Christian’s life, He is truly a friend. Paul tells us that “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:” (Romans 8:16). This witness is universal to all who are saved, and results in a response from the new child of God of “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15), which is a tender expression of confidence indicating both relationship and trust.

2. Recognize, abhor, and faithfully confess personal sin
(1 John 1:5-2:2)

When you are saved, all of your sins are forgiven. But you still have what the Bible calls “the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” (Ephesians 4:22), i.e., the sin nature. Given this, you will sin. You will experience a battle within your soul between the indwelling Holy Spirit and the “old man” and its desire to sin. When you sin, the Spirit will be grieved, and condemn you for your disobedience. Upon being convicted of the sin in your life, you will be drawn to the Lord in prayer to confess your sin so that your peace and fellowship with Him is restored. As my father used to say, you will take God’s side against yourself. This is a sure sign that you are a child of God.

3. Delight in and have a deepening commitment to understanding and obeying God's Word
(1 John 2:3-6; 18-27; 4:1-6)

Men are saved “by the foolishness of preaching” (1 Corinthians 1:21). It was under the preaching of the Word that you first truly heard the voice of God. As a child of God you will want to hear more and more from your heavenly Father. You will want to learn more and more about your Friend and Savior. You will want to understand more about your responsibilities and privileges as a “joint heir with Christ” (Romans 8:17). You gain all of this knowledge from reading and studying God’s Word. It will truly become spiritual “bread,” “water,” and “meat” to you.

4. Have a sincere compassion and love for fellow believers
(1 John 2:7-11)

The true Church is called the body of Christ (Colossians 1:24), and is composed of all true Believers. If you are truly saved, you will desire and pursue fellowship with both the Lord Jesus Christ and His body. If you truly love the Lord Jesus Christ, you will love other Christians, and want to be around them, especially the local gathering of Believers within the local church in whose fellowship He has placed you.

5. Have a noticeable change of desires from worldliness to godliness
(1 John 2:12-17)

When you are saved, you receive the life of Christ. Paul expressed this precious truth in this way:

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” Galatians 2:20

Given this reality, Peter exhorts us: “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;” (1 Peter 1:15). Worldliness and godliness cannot coexist. One or the other must rule. As a Christian The Spirit will be constantly molding you “unto a perfect [i.e. “complete”] man” (Ephesians 4:13) so that your life will ultimately be “to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.” (Ephesians 1:12).

6. Show an increasing personal conformity to Christ-likeness
(1 John 2:28-3:10)

We are called “sons of God,” the “children of God,” and “joint heirs with Christ.” John here tells us that, when we are finally in heaven with the Lord in our glorified bodies, “we shall be like him.” In giving instruction to Christian husbands, Paul provides us a glimpse of this work of Christ:

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Ephesians 5:25-27

That this work will be completed is certain, for the Word tells us that “he which hath begun a good work in you will perform [i.e., “complete”] it until the day of Jesus Christ:” (Philippians 1:6). This process of becoming “like” the Lord begins as soon as you are saved, and progresses throughout your life on earth.

7. Be in *undeserved conflict* (nonconformity) with the world
(1 John 3:11-13)

The Lord was very straight-forward in His instructions to His disciples and us:

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before *it hated* you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.”
John 15:18-20

James tells us very bluntly, “know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity [i.e., “hatred”] with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4). As a Christian you are instructed to “as much as lieth in you, be at peace with all men” (Romans 12:18). However, as the Lord has taught us, the world will not always return the favor. His Spirit in you makes you different, and that difference will manifest itself. You will be separate from the world to some significant degree, like it or not.

8. Have *increasing confidence and fellowship* with the Lord *in prayer*
(1 John 3:19-24; 5:14-15)

As I’ve already said, one of the first acts you will do as a new Christian is say “Abba, Father” (Romans 8:15). This is your “first prayer” as a newly born child of God. It is the most tender of expressions, and initiates an increasingly intimate relationship with your God and Savior.

The Word also calls the Lord our Bridegroom. As you travel through this life and grow in faith, your familiarity with Him and pleasure in His company will increase. You will seek His presence, affection, and direction for your life more and more. Just as an earthly bride grows closer to and wants to be with and commune with her fiance more and more as her wedding day approaches, so it will be with you and the Lord. As you experience His love for you and realize more and more your dependence on Him, you will seek His face in prayer more often. And as you walk with Him and your understanding of His ways and confidence in His faithfulness to you increases, your prayers will become more effective, more attuned to His will than your own.

While these will not be manifested in all Christians equally, all real Christians will manifest all of these to some degree. Unconfessed sin will hinder these fruits, but, if your are truly born again, as you walk obediently in your Savior’s love, you will grow in grace and godly character, and these traits will be manifested more and more in your life.

Well, how do you stack up? Do these brief reflections assure your heart, or is there still something that seems missing from your Christian life? If you feel you “come up short,” there can be at least two reasons why:

1. On the one hand, you may be saved, but you are not walking “in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:16). In other words, you may be walking according to your own will. If you are, though you are a Christian, you are out of fellowship with your Lord so that He cannot bless you as He desires for “God is not mocked” (Galatians 6:7). In this case, you have His gracious offer included in the above passages:

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9

2. On the other hand, your uneasiness may be because you are not truly saved! This may be difficult to admit, but your eternal destiny depends on the reality of your salvation, not an intellectual hope. You must be honest with yourself. You must be sure.

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” 1 John 4:10

“...God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8

“*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” Romans 8:1-9

“...The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we have preached; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved...For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Romans 10:9, 13