



You Can Be Sure

How would you respond if I asked you right now, "Are you saved?"

You ought to be able to say, "Praise God! Glory to God! I know that I'm saved!"

Yet many Christians don't know they're saved. They go around with their shoulders all bent over--drooping, wondering, and worrying. They remind me of question marks with their heads bent over, rather than exclamation points standing straight and tall and saying, "I know whom I have believed!"

Rather than being shouting Christians, they're doubting Christians. Rather than having a "know-so" salvation, they have a "hope-so" salvation.

Somebody once said, if you could have it and not know it, you could lose it and not miss it. But the truth is, if you have salvation, you know it; and if you have it and know it, you can never lose it.

I met a young man once in a hospital room. I had just led his dying mother-in-law to the Lord Jesus Christ, and I turned to him and said, "Isn't it wonderful that she has been saved?"

"Oh, no one can know that they are saved," he said.

Now this man was not an unbeliever; that is, he did not repudiate Christianity. He simply held some doctrinal stance that would not allow him to accept the assurance of salvation.

But the Apostle John wrote an entire chapter to assure God's people that they are indeed God's people. "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).

The word *know* means absolute assurance. According to verse 13, it is possible to be saved and know it. But the very fact that John wrote this verse shows that it is also possible to be saved and doubt it.

Is doubt good? No. Doubt is to your spirit what pain is to your body. Pain is a warning, a signal that something is wrong. It does not mean you are dead. It just means that something is wrong.

If you have doubts and you are truly a born again child of God, you are suffering from some spiritual sickness. All Christians doubt from time to time. A woman once told Dwight L. Moody she had been saved for 25 years and never had a doubt. He said, "I doubt you're saved."

But while we may all be bothered by an occasional doubt, it is a problem that must and can be overcome. John said he wrote chapter five to us as God's children so that we may know that we have been saved. The words *know*, *knoweth*, or *known* appear 38 times in this epistle on assurance.

The next logical question, then, is "How can I know?" I know, not because of any confidence

that I have in myself, but by two infallible proofs.

The Root of Our Belief

What is it we believe? Are Christians just gullible? Do we believe in fairy tales, or is there a basis for our belief? Why do we believe what we believe?

Faith is the root of our belief. But faith is not walking on eggshells and Jello. It is evidence and substance (Hebrews 11:1). It has some spiritual steel and concrete in it. It is real, and God has given us some authentic, bona fide witnesses, a testimony that we might know we are saved and going to heaven.

John says these witnesses are the eternal work of the Savior, the internal witness of the Spirit, and the external Word of Scripture.

1 John 5:6 says, "This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood." When the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, a soldier put a spear in His side, "and forthwith came there out blood and water" (John 19:34). This is the eternal work of the Savior, that we are saved by blood and sanctified by water.

The tabernacle is an Old Testament picture of Christ. When you entered, you came first to the brazen altar upon which the bloody sacrifice was made. Next was a laver, or great basin, in which the priests would wash. First the blood, then the water. The blood of Jesus Christ pays the price for our sins, and the sanctifying water keeps us clean.

Sound familiar? In "Rock of Ages," we sing "Let the water and the blood / from Thy wounded side which flowed / be of sin the double cure / save from wrath and make me pure."

I know I am saved because Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died to purchase my salvation. That is a historical fact. That is the saving work of Christ.

I also know I am saved because of the internal witness of the Spirit:

It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one (1 John 5:6-8).

How do I *know* there was a man named Jesus Christ? How do I *know* He was the sinless Son of God? How do I *know* that God sent Him? How do I *know* that He actually died on that cross and took my sin?

Thank God I don't have to depend on somebody's argument. The Holy Spirit of God is here to make that real in my heart. You see, God gave us the work of Christ. But to make the work of Christ--the water and the blood--real to us, He gave us the Spirit.

"If we receive the witness of men," John says in 1 John 5:9, "the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son." The word *if* may also be translated *since*. Since we believe the witness of men. All of us believe the witness of men.

One night I was in Augusta, Georgia, preaching at a missions conference. The next morning I went to the airport and flew back to Memphis. In order to do this, I had to exercise faith in an airplane pilot I didn't know. I never saw his credentials. I never saw him fly before. But Delta Airlines put its stamp of approval on this man, so I just got on the plane and never thought too much about it. We accept the witness of men.

Before I went to the airport, I had breakfast in a restaurant. How did I know the food was not poisoned? I had faith in that lady who served it. We receive the witness of men.

When your doctor writes you a prescription, you look at it, and although you can't read it, pronounce it, or understand it, you give it to a pharmacist who puts pills in a bottle. Then, without a second thought, you take them home and swallow them. Why? We receive the witness of men.

In the same way, through faith we receive the witness of God through the Spirit that Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead for our sanctification. There is, therefore, no excuse for not believing. The Bible promises that the Holy Spirit will help anyone to believe who wants to believe. First the Spirit witnesses *to* us; then He witnesses *in* us.

"He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself" (1 John 5:10). Before I got saved, He witnessed to me. He told me what Christ did is true. Now He witnesses in me. I have the witness in myself.

Suppose I am enjoying myself by eating a piece of apple pie, and you come to me and say, "There is no such thing as apple pie. I don't believe in apple pie. And if there is apple pie, it is no good."

Despite your arguments, I have the witness within me. I have the witness on the inside. A Christian with a testimony is never at the mercy of an unbeliever with an argument, because he has the witness in himself.

Finally, the external Word of Scripture assures me that I am saved:

He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of His Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 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" (1 John 5:10-13).

Here is the basis of our belief. Here is the reason for our certainty. We are not just gullible fools. Jesus Christ died. He came by water and blood. The Holy Spirit of God says yes, that is true. It is all attested by the Word of God.

To doubt the Bible is to call God a liar. Some say, "Well, I'm trying to believe." But they have called God a liar, plain and simple. Either this is His Word--His inerrant, infallible Word--or it is not. And the work of Christ, the witness of the Spirit, and the Word of God all say it is. It is fact, a matter of record.

Let me give you another example. Suppose I am in a courtroom, and the judge says to me, "Mr. Rogers, are you married?"

I say, "Yes I am."

"Well can you prove you are married, Mr. Rogers?"

"Yes, I can. You see, I was there in the church, and I saw Joyce coming down the aisle. My heart got all twitterpated, and I was so happy. Your honor, it's the most wonderful feeling in the world to be married."

When I'm finished, the judge will say, "I'm sorry. While I am glad you feel that way, your feelings are not evidence in this courtroom. Do you have some proof?"

Then I go down to the courthouse. And I get that document, notarized, signed, and sealed, and I bring it before the judge. And he accepts my marriage as proven fact.

My salvation does not hinge on my emotions. I have an official record. I have the Word of God: "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).

One night while out soul-winning, I asked a man if he wanted to receive Christ as his personal Lord and Savior. After we prayed together, I said, "Now, sir, I want to give you your spiritual birth certificate." And I turned to John 5:24 and read, "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."

We started to read it through again. "Verily, verily, I say unto you," I read. Then I told him, "It's Jesus who is speaking. Do you believe this?"

"Yes," he said.

"He that heareth My word. . . .' Have you heard His Word?"

"Yes."

". . . and believeth on Him that sent Me. . . .' Have you believed on the God that sent the Lord Jesus?"

"Yes."

". . . hath everlasting life. . . .' Do you have everlasting life?"

"Well, I hope so," he said.

I said, "Let's read it again." And we did. Again, he answered yes to every question except the last. Again, he said,

"Well, I hope so."

"Let's read it again," I said. This time, when I asked him if he had everlasting life, the light went on inside.

"Why, yes! Yes!" he shouted.

"Who says so?"

"God says so! God says so!"

That is the basis of your belief. That's the source of your certainty. Isn't it better to have God's Word than Adrian's or your neighbor's or your opinions, emotions, wishes, or whims?

The Fruit of Our Behavior

In addition to the root of our belief, we need only look at the fruit of our behavior to know whether or not we are truly saved. What has Jesus done in me? Is this all just some intellectual exercise, or has there been a change? The Apostle John is very practical here. He shows us how our salvation ought to show up in our behavior, and he gives three tests.

The Commandment Test

And hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked (1 John 2:3-6).

I wonder if John had been in a testimony meeting where somebody was bragging about being saved--saying he was, but his walk and his talk did not get together. If you say you are saved, it is absolutely going to show up in your life. You are going to be keeping the commandments of God. You do not keep the commandments of God in order to be saved; you keep the

commandments of God because you are saved.

This presents a serious problem, because not one of us has always kept all of God's commandments. I haven't since I've been saved, and you haven't since you've been saved. Yet the Bible says that we know we are in Him in that we keep His commandments.

Both the problem and the solution are found in the word *keep*. It is actually a mariner's word. In the apostles' day, sailors navigated by the stars. And a sailor setting his course by the stars was said to be "keeping the stars." It was his intention to sail by the stars.

To *keep* God's commandments, then, means to use the Word of God as the Guide for our lives. It is the desire of every child of God to live by His Word. While we may be blown off course, distracted, or confused, the goal of our lives is to keep the commandments of God.

Ever since I gave my heart to Jesus, there has been a deep, divine, radical change; and there is in me a burning desire to live for God. And there should be in you, too, if you are saved.

This is not to say that I don't sin anymore. The difference is that before I got saved I was running to sin; now I am running *from* it. And if I fail, I turn right around and start running away again.

The commandment test says: if you can willfully and knowingly sin against the will of God with no conviction, no compunction, and no remorse, you need to get saved. A lot of people say, "Well, I walked down an aisle somewhere, and I got saved. I know I'm just an old backslider now, but I'm still saved and going to heaven."

No, you are not. If you are living that way--high, wide, and handsome--and it does not break your heart, then you do not know the God of the Bible.

The Companion Test

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren" (1 John 3:14). When I am saved, I want to be right with my Father, and I want to be right with my brother.

But there are some who would say, "Well, I'm saved, but I have no use for the church." But the Bible says if we love Jesus, we are going to love what Jesus loves; and Jesus loves the church.

The word *saint* (singular) appears in the Bible only five times. The plural appears nearly 100 times. Now, going to church will not make you a Christian any more than going to the garage will make you an automobile. But when you realize that you have been bought by the blood of Christ, when the Spirit of God comes into you, you receive a new nature, and you are going to keep His commandments and love the brethren.

The Commitment Test

The greatest and strongest test is the *commitment test*. All of the others grow out of it. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself. . . . These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:10, 13).

In the Bible, the words *believe* and *commit* are the same word. Concerning Jesus, it says, "Many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did. But Jesus did not

commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men" (John 2:23-24). They said they believed in Him, but He did not believe in them. He knew that they were just miracle-mongers. He knew that they were not true believers.

Biblical faith is not just an intellectual exercise. You do not believe *about* Jesus, you believe *in* Jesus. You commit yourself to Jesus.

I did not believe *about* the plane that flew me from Augusta to Memphis; I believed *in* it. I committed myself to that airplane. I did not just say, "Those things can fly. I'm going to Memphis. I believe it can fly. I believe that man is a good pilot. I have confidence in the airline." No, I got on board and entrusted that pilot and that aircraft with my life. He who commits himself to that plane flies to Memphis. And he who commits himself to the Son of God lives forever with Him. I committed myself to that plane. He who commits himself to the Son of God is the one who is saved. Have you done this?

Notice it doesn't say, he who *has* believed; it says He who *believes*. It is always present tense. Have you ever asked someone, "Are you saved?"

They say, "Yes, I'm saved. I remember walking down the aisle when I was nine years old, giving my hand to my pastor and my heart to Jesus Christ. Now, I may not be living for God right now, I'll admit. But I know I'm saved, because I remember what I did when I was a nine-year-old boy. I remember believing on Jesus Christ." The Bible never uses such an experience as proof of salvation. It never points back to some time when you believed on Jesus Christ.

I even hear people say, "If you cannot show me the place and the moment when you received Jesus Christ, you are not saved." That is not biblical. The Bible never says you know when or if you are saved by something you remember in the past. It says, "He that believes."

I am not saying there is not a time when you received Christ. There was a day. Absolutely. But that is not the test. The test is, do you believe in Jesus Christ now? Are you trusting in Him today? Is there evidence in your life today that you are the offspring of the living God? That is the proof of your salvation.

A Closing Plea

My friend, have you given your life to the Lord? Do you have the assurance that if you were to die right now, you would go straight to heaven? If not, please let me tell you how you can be saved.

Admit Your Sin

First, you must understand that you are a sinner. The Bible says, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Abandon Self-Effort

Second, you must understand that you cannot save yourself by your efforts. The Bible is very clear that it's "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5).

Again, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Acknowledge Christ's Payment

Third, you must believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died for your sins. The Bible says, "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). That means He died in your place. Your sin debt has been paid by the blood of Jesus Christ, which "cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Accept Him as Savior

Fourth, you must put your faith in Jesus Christ and Him alone for your salvation. The blood of Christ does you no good until you receive Him by faith. The Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31).

Have you ever taken this all-important step of faith? If not, I urge you to do it right now. Why? Because Jesus is the only way to heaven!

Speaking of Jesus, the Apostle Peter said in Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Jesus Himself said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me" (John 14:6). It couldn't be any clearer than that.

Are you willing to offer the following prayer to God today?

"Oh, God, I'm a sinner, I'm lost, and I need to be saved. I know I can't save myself, so right now, once and for all, I trust You to save me. Come into my heart, forgive my sin, and make me Your child. I give You my life. I will live for You as You give me strength."

If you will make this your heartfelt prayer, God will hear and save you! Jesus has promised that He will not turn away anyone who comes to Him in faith (John 6:37). He will make you a child of God, if you will turn to Him (John 1:12).

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