

How can someone know if he is really a Christian? This question may be of no interest to most unbelievers, but there are many believers who struggle with it. They may know that sinners are declared righteous before God by grace alone, through faith alone and in Christ alone, but do they themselves have the kind of faith, the saving kind, which actually lays hold of Christ and secures a genuine hope of heaven. For them, it's not an academic matter but a subject of great personal concern. They desperately desire the comfort of knowing that they belong to Jesus Christ, that He belongs to them and is their Saviour, and they want the assurance that He will preserve them as His own in life and in death.

This short paper has been written to help believers come to such an assurance. My prayer is that the Lord may use it to convict many, and that for others, those still not persuaded, it may at least be instrumental as a first step in what may become a much longer process of reaching that blessed assurance.

Here are seven points, each of which gives classic evidence of a true, saving faith, and, taken together, they provide incontrovertible proof of one's sure standing in Christ. Please weigh each point carefully, prayerfully, and test to see if it is true of you.

1. If you are really a Christian, Christ will be precious to you (1 Pet. 2:7). This is a good place at which to begin. What do you think of the Lord Jesus Christ? Some unbelievers may know a lot about Him, but believers know Him personally, and, even those believers who know very little about Him, if they search their own hearts, they will realize that they cannot deny their love for Him.

2. If you are really a Christian, you will hate sin, especially your own (Ezek. 36:31), and you will seek every opportunity to turn from it. This is the other side of the first point, and they go together. If anyone truly loves Christ, he will also hate the sin in his life and every inclination that would separate him from Him.

3. If you really are a Christian, you will trust in Christ (and in Christ alone) for salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Your faith may be very weak

at times - like the father who came to Jesus, you cry out for grace to overcome your unbelief (Mark 9:24) - but even the smallest, weakest faith in Christ is still a true and saving faith.

4. If you really are a Christian, you have the Holy Spirit who bears witness to and with the Word of God upon your heart as you read it, and so you believe that Word, all that He has revealed in the Holy Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16), from the account of creation in Genesis to the apocalypse of Revelation, from what our triune God is like (His attributes) to what we are like (sinners in need of salvation). You will, indeed, “let God be true but every man a liar” (Rom 3:4).

5. If you really are a Christian, you will obey the Lord, whom you serve as your heavenly Master, and will want to please Him in every way that you can (1 John 5:2). This is not to say that you will be perfect, and not disappoint yourself time and again, but you will not knowingly and willingly continue in sin. This is what the fear of God is about, it’s having such reverence for the Lord that we are afraid of what we might do, or fail to do, that we will in any way bring shame or disgrace upon Him and possibly cause the heathen to blaspheme His name.

6. If you really are a Christian, you will strive to know the Lord better than you do, and love Him more, and so you will make diligent use of all the public and private means of grace to that end (Psalm 84:2). You will be eager to attend the assemblies of God’s people, to place yourself under the ministry of His Word, and so grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. There are no churchless Christians.

7. If you really are a Christian, you will want to tell others about the Lord. Like Andrew (John 1:41), the woman at the well (John 4:28,29) and so many others, you will talk about the Man from Galilee; the joy of knowing Him and what He has done for you will spur you on and be a powerful testimony (Mark 5:19,20).

If these things are true of you, you have through faith a saving interest in Christ, and what work He has begun in you, believer, He will surely finish. The saints in glory may experience greater joy than you, at least for now, but they do not have a greater security.

If, though, these things are not true of you, you are yet an unbeliever. You are still in your sin, and you dare not die in such a state. You need to turn from your sin, therefore, embrace Christ as your Saviour, and you need to do that today! Are you afraid? The Lord has revealed that He is able to save all who come unto His Father through Him (Heb. 7:25), and He has promised that He will never cast out any of all who do come to Him (John 6:37).