

How can I know that I am Saved?

2 Peter 1:10-11

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeefamily.com/?page_id=3567

How can one truly know if one is saved or not? While many are quick to publicly say YES, I am saved, their young age of conversion, their failing to forgive others, their continuation to sin, their general lack of faith and fruits of the Spirit; has left many to question their salvation. If those who prophesy, drive out demons and perform miracles in the name of Jesus are in danger of hearing the words “I never knew you, away from me, you evildoers” (Matthew 7:21-23) then why shouldn’t the “lukewarm carnal” Christians of today’s society fear they won’t make it to heaven either? Since salvation is not based on something tangible like good deeds (Ephesians 2:8-9) but on hope and assurance of what is unseen (Hebrews 11:1), what evidence exists that proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that one is truly saved? And even if one was saved at one point in time, would not a lack of faith in Jesus in the present mean salvation lost? In today’s sermon we are going to examine how one can confirm one’s salvation and in doing so put aside any fear of not spending an eternity with Jesus.

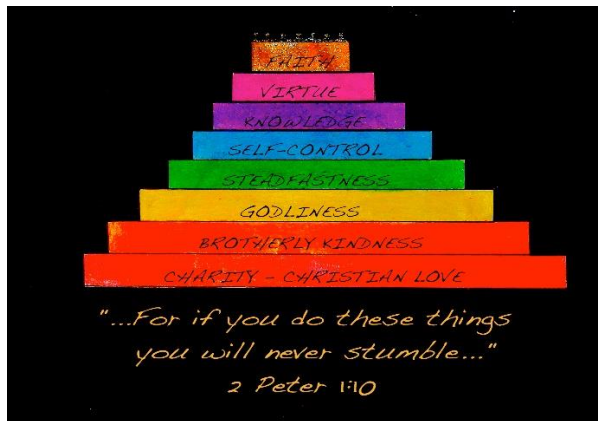
The Command to Seek Assurance

¹⁰ Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, ¹¹ and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:10-11, NIV

In the above verses Peter commands the believer to pursue proof that their calling and election are sure.¹ Eternal security is initiated by God the Father (Ephesians 1:4), accomplished through the Son (Ephesians 1:7) and guaranteed by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14). Assurance is confidence that a believer is eternally secured and will one day go and be with God in heaven. Peter tells the elect to pursue this assurance by doing the following:

¹ R. C. Sproul, [Can I Be Sure I’m Saved?](#), vol. 7, The Crucial Questions Series (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2010), 45.



5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love.

2 Peter 1:5-7, NIV

This does not mean that Peter is teaching salvation is obtained by works but merely that works are proof of one's salvation. Obtaining assurance of one's salvation is important for the believer to obtain because it gives one comfort so that one might work out one's salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12) as one encounters the various trial and tribulations of life (James 1:1-4; 2 Timothy 3:12).² Since obtaining the glorious inheritance of salvation (Ephesians 1:15-23) is of infinite value, should not everyone want a guaranteed they are going to spend an eternity with God in heaven? While this might seem impossible, Peter would not have given the command to seek assurance unless it could be obtained!

A False Sense of Security

While assurance is obtainable there are many "professed Christians" who believe they are saved when they are not! After Jesus told the crowd at the Sermon on the Mount that the gate to eternal life was narrow (Matthew 7:13), He later said the following:

²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

Matthew 7:21-23, NIV

² R. C. Sproul, [Can I Be Sure I'm Saved?](#), vol. 7, The Crucial Questions Series (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2010), 46.

Just because a person calls Jesus “Lord, Lord” which in Hebrew is a grammatical structure that indicates a personal relationship with Him,³ does not mean that one has obtained salvation.⁴ Is it possible then that those who are immersed in the daily life and ministry of the church are not saved? Let’s look at the Parable of the Sower. Are there not many who hear the word, receive immediate joy and yet fall away when persecuted (Matthew 13:20-21)? Do not some of the “spur of the moment” conversions fall into this category?⁵ And what about those who hear the word and the worries of this life and deceitfulness of wealth choke it out (13:22)? Members of both groups at one time thought they were saved and yet they were not! This leaves us with an uneasy question: what if I am wrong about God, either His requirements or my response to Him? After all, we can understand the heart that can be deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9)? While assurance is imperative, how can one be certain of one’s eternal destiny?

Salvation Checklist⁶

If you want assurance of your salvation read 1 John in its entirety. The primary focus of this short book is to “emphasize the centrality of the incarnate Word”⁷ in a person’s life should be made evident and measured by the genuineness of one’s Christian lifestyle.⁸ For John there are tangible signs within one’s life that proves one is truly saved. John states the purpose of writing this book was that his readers might “believe in the name of the Son of God so that you might know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13). Upon closer examination of this book one can create a salvation checklist to help determine if one is saved or not. As you answer each of these questions spend a significant time in prayer to make sure your response comes from the Spirit



³ R. C. Sproul, [Can I Be Sure I’m Saved?](#), vol. 7, The Crucial Questions Series (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2010), 4.

⁴ Robert H. Mounce, [Matthew](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 69.

⁵ R. C. Sproul, [Can I Be Sure I’m Saved?](#), vol. 7, The Crucial Questions Series (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2010), 11.

⁶ Taken from June Hunt, [Biblical Counseling Keys on Assurance of Salvation: Safe, Sealed, and Secure](#) (Dallas, TX: Hope For The Heart, 2008).

⁷ Gary M. Burge, [Letters of John](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 49.

⁸ Glenn W. Barker, [“1 John,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 293.

of God. While this checklist is not meant to be “everything” God’s word says on assurance, it is a good starting point to help determine whether one is saved or not.

1. Do I live by the truth, rejecting deeds done in darkness?

“If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.” (1 John 1:6)

Fellowship or a right relationship with God cannot be obtained by those who walk in the darkness. For John, one is either in the light or darkness (2:9-11), a child of God or of the Devil (3:10; 5:19).⁹ When a person becomes born again a fundamental change occurs in their perspective concerning sin. Once a person becomes born again they will no longer desire to live on the broad path of habitual darkness with indifference to God’s ways¹⁰ but instead will hate every path that takes them away from God (Psalms 119:104).

2. Do I sin less than I did before I claimed to become a Christian?

“No one who lives in Him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen Him or known Him.” (1 John 3:6)

Since the attitude of the born-again believer is one of avoidance and hatred of all sin then it only stands to reason that through the power of the Holy Spirit they will sin less and less as they mature in the faith.¹¹ Believers are no longer slaves to sin but slaves to righteousness (Romans 6:15-23). This does not mean that anyone who sins is not a Christian but merely that born-again believers commit themselves to holiness (1 Peter 1:16) and when they sin their natural desire will be to confess it as lawlessness, be forgiven and abandon any desire to commit that sin again.¹²

⁹ Thomas F. Johnson, [1, 2, and 3 John](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 29.

¹⁰ Gary M. Burge, [Letters of John](#), The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 68.

¹¹ Thomas F. Johnson, [1, 2, and 3 John](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 71.

¹² Glenn W. Barker, [“1 John,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 332.

3. Do I enjoy fellowship with other believers?

“If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7)

Because **love** has its origin in God, those who belong to God (4:4, 6) should demonstrate **love** in their relations with one another.¹³ There is but one body of Christ in which each person has been assigned a divine role that is to be used to build one another up in the faith (1 Corinthians 12). Those who are Christians are to “spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting with one another” (Hebrews 10:24-25). Jesus, the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:19-22), died for the church (Ephesians 5:25) so that through our fellowship, sharing and praying for one another we would grow in love, knowledge and fellowship with our Creator.¹⁴

4. Do I genuinely love other Christians?

“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.” (1 John 3:14)

You will know who are “born from above” (John 3:3, 7) or “born of the Spirit” (John 3:5) based on their love towards other Christians.¹⁵ This is not just the kind of love that is a feeling only but one that genuinely gets involved and helps fellow believers (1 John 3:17-18). Loving Christians does not equate to salvation any more than good deeds do (Ephesians 2:8-9) but is evidence that a person knows God and has eternal life.¹⁶

5. Do I love God’s Word and seek to obey it?

We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God’s love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him.” (1 John 2:3–5)

¹³ Thomas F. Johnson, [1, 2, and 3 John](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 101.

¹⁴ Colin G. Kruse, [The Letters of John](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.; Apollos, 2000), 64.

¹⁵ Thomas F. Johnson, [1, 2, and 3 John](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 82.

¹⁶ Glenn W. Barker, [“1 John,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 335.

To walk in the light and have fellowship with God means one must strive to be holy as God is holy.¹⁷ The commands John is referring to is not the Mosaic Laws but to believe in the name of Jesus and to love one another.¹⁸ This does not however exclude the spirit of the Law and all the commands of the New Testament. For Christians God's word is to be a lamp unto their feet (Psalms 119:105) that they gladly meditate on day and night (Psalms 119:97).

6. Do I reject the values I see in the world system?

“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.” (1 John 2:15–17)

Those who are Christians will not love the ways of this world. It is not the material world that John is saying is evil as some Gnostics believed but the lust of the flesh and eyes and pride of life. Focusing on the things of this earth rather than the things above is a sign one is not a born again believer.¹⁹ Those who would rather stay on the broad path (Matthew 7:13-24) and satisfy the evil desires of their hearts (James 1:13-15) by lusting after treasures that are here today and gone tomorrow (Matthew 6:19-21), rather than selflessly lovingly providing for their brothers,²⁰ should question whether or not they have been born again.

7. Do I experience opposition because of my love for Christ?

“Do not be surprised, my brothers, if the world hates you.” (1 John 3:13)

Those who walk on the path of darkness hate the light because they fear their evil deeds will be exposed (John 3:20). Since Christians refuse to walk in step with the wicked they will not be accepted by the world (John 15:18-27). The world hated Jesus (John 7:7), persecuted and

¹⁷ Glenn W. Barker, [“1 John,”](#) in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 315.

¹⁸ Douglas J. Moo, [“The Letters and Revelation,”](#) in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 2563.

¹⁹ Thomas F. Johnson, [1, 2, and 3 John](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 52.

²⁰ Glenn W. Barker, [“1 John,”](#) in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 321.

crucified Him.²¹ While most Christians will not be asked to die for Christ, simply proclaiming the Gospel message to a world that hates Him will inevitably invite some sort of persecution.

8. Do I truly believe in Jesus by relying fully on Him for my salvation and future?

“Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart. Anyone who does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because he has not believed the testimony God has given about His Son. And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” (1 John 5:10–11)

If one does not believe in the atoning death of Jesus Christ, then one simply cannot get into heaven. God testified that He gave His Son so that whosoever should believe in Him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16). Jesus verified His Father’s words by saying, “I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes unto the Father except through me” (John 14:6). If you do not believe Jesus paid the price for your sins and is the only way to heaven, then you are not saved!

9. Do I experience answered prayer?

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of Him.” (1 John 5:14–15)

“It is not “any” prayer that is answered but the prayer of the disciple who is in fellowship with the Father, who asks in Jesus’ name (John 14:13; 15:16), who “remains” in Him (15:7), and who obeys His commands (1 John 3:22).”²² Those who born again will have confidence that prayer will be heard and fulfilled when they are given in accordance with God’s will.²³ His will can be known through fasting, prayer and mediation on His Word.

²¹ Thomas F. Johnson, [1, 2, and 3 John](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 81.

²² Glenn W. Barker, [“1 John,”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Hebrews through Revelation*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 354.

²³ Thomas F. Johnson, [1, 2, and 3 John](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 134.

10. Has the Holy Spirit personally confirmed your salvation?

¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory (Romans 8:15-17).

Even though the last item on the salvation checklist is not from 1 John, I want to finish this sermon with this crucial passage. Not only does the Spirit enable a believer to live holy lives but also testifies to our spirit that we are truly one of God’s children!²⁴ Since the Spirit does not want believers to live in fear, He will commune or speak and confirm to our spirit that we truly are God’s children!

Conclusion

How can one truly know if one is saved or not can be known by examining one’s response to the Gospel message. This does not mean that salvation is by works but that works demonstrated in the life of the believer is proof of one’s adoption into God’s family. Those who live by the truth, sin less, enjoy the fellowship and love other believers, obey God’s Word, reject the ways of this world, are being persecuted and have their prayers answered YES when asked in the will of God; can feel confident they are saved. Except for question eight, if several of the items on the checklist were left unchecked this does not necessarily mean a person is not saved but that there are opportunities for spiritual growth. If you left item eight blank or many of the other items, then examine your heart for you might not be saved. Finally, if you doubt your salvation ask the Holy Spirit and He will tell you for He does not want any believer to live in fear of their eternal destination!

²⁴ Douglas J. Moo, [“The Letters and Revelation,”](#) in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 2306.