

The Serious Faith Guide To:

ARE YOU

Really
SAVED?

G. Brent Riggs

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Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, **'I never knew you; depart from Me**, you who practice lawlessness!

Matthew 7:21-23; NKJV, emphasis mine

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, **that you may know** that **you have eternal life**, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

1 John 5:13; NKJV, emphasis mine

The Bible is very clear. A lot of people who think they are saved are not, but... God also wrote "these things" so you can know for sure one way or another. **Are you sure?**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brent". The signature is stylized with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning and a loop at the end.

About the Author

Brent Riggs is an author, teacher, artist, and businessman with many published titles and large growing audience online.

He is a married father of eight and loves the simple life of small-town Oklahoma.

You can find out more about Brent at www.BrentRiggs.com or visit his professional website: www.RiggsDesignWorks.com.

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Some of My Other books

(all my books are at www.brentriggs.com/stuff):



Terrorist To Evangelist

The True Story of Cornelius Kenneth McClinton

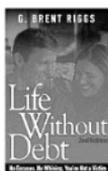
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Sinners In The Hands of An Angry God

A Modern Rendition By Brent Riggs

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How to get out of debt, how to stay out of debt; the truth about the credit industry; how to save money, how to reduce expense; timeless principles about personal finance.



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Knowing The Will Of God

The Guide That Teaches You How to Confidently Determine God's Will in Your Life

An incredibly useful topical guide to Bible Verses; Brent Riggs Bible messages, quotes and more; over 200 pages.

Are You REALLY Saved?

Can You Be Sure? Does the Bible Give Us An Objective Way to Evaluate or Measure?

While most of the world ignores this most vital question, is there really any question that is more important or has more eternal impact?

Sadly, even the Church increasingly ignores objectively considering the issue of “genuine salvation” at a time when it could hardly be more relevant. Millions of people sit in churches and read books by Christian celebrities without ever hearing anything but a “Jesus will improve your life” message, as opposed to the Bible which plainly and repeatedly presents a “You are in danger, Jesus must SAVE your life” Gospel.

The former self-help gospel results in multitudes of emotional decisions and casual Christian

converts to that rarely result in “living sacrifices” (Romans 12:1).

The Biblical Gospel of “danger and rescue” is accepted upon the realization that we have a NEED TO BE SAVED from something. A Savior is only necessary when a person recognizes they are in a situation that calls for a rescue and there is nothing they can personally do to rescue themselves. Genuine salvation is the spiritual enlightenment of a person by God who opens blind eyes to their predicament: a sinner condemned to Hell with no way of saving themselves from it apart from Christ.

That realization alone allows us to cry out “Save me!” to the Savior.

The “come to Jesus because He can make your life all it can be” life-improvement Gospel has resulted in millions of professing Christians who cannot say, and indeed do not know, for sure if they are truly saved. Even if they answer “yes I’m sure”, how can they know for certain?

The Bible says we can know for certain.

If you cannot answer the question “Am I Really Saved?” with objective Biblical truth, you should keep reading. It’s not a question you want to be unsure about.

The Evidence of True Salvation: Will Jesus Know You?

Matthew 7:21-23 - "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' (NKJV)

This is one of the most disturbing verses in all of Scripture.

I have often read it and pictured myself standing in front of the Lord saying, "did I not go to church?"; "did I not study my Bible?"; "did not I even write a daily Bible devotional?"; "didn't I do a lot of works for you?" It terrifies me to picture the Lord looking down at me with unknowing eyes and saying, "who are you? I don't know you. Go away and don't come back."

Many people today would call those kinds of thoughts "doubting" or a lack of faith. After all, I've prayed a prayer of repentance, I've been baptized, I attend church, and I've done all the right things that Christians should do. So shouldn't I just pass over this verse and assume that is meant for other people? Does the Lord's warning have meaning for every Christian, or just those who have a shallow commitment? Or maybe just the blatant hypocrite?

I believe the first and primary application of these verses is obviously to teach us that our good works will not save us. It doesn't matter if we cast out demons, or do miracles, or go to the right church, or say the Sinner's Prayer, or be baptized... if we believe that **these things save us** rather than the atoning death of Jesus Christ, we will be lost. No amount of good works or deeds will merit us one single day in Heaven.

There is nothing sadder than to see a person sacrifice their entire life in service to God or mankind when you know that they are trying to earn their way to Heaven. Their end is no better than the vilest wicked person. Yet to try and tell them is often fruitless because they

are convinced that a "loving God" would never condemn such a "good" person.

What application do these verses have for those who know that works cannot save you?

Is there an application for Christians who know and have responded to the true Gospel and don't necessarily doubt their salvation? I think there are many. First, these verses force us not to take our salvation for granted. They cause us to re-examine our faith and to make sure that our motivation for serving God is on His terms and not ours.

Philippians 2:12 - Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; (NKJV)

What does it mean to work out your salvation with fear and trembling? We know without a doubt from other Scripture that this does not mean that you can earn salvation by works. Among other things, it is one of the many Scriptural admonitions for us to never take our salvation for granted, and to routinely examine our lives and search our hearts to make sure that we're doing things God's Way.

Let me answer the obvious question that will arise at this point. No, I'm not saying that we should live a life constantly doubting our salvation. Do I believe that a Christian can be 100% sure of their salvation? Yes, read the book of 1st John. I also don't believe that we have to wait until Judgment Day and "hope for the best." Hopelessness is not a characteristic of true saving faith. But diligence and self-examination in light of God's Word is.

However, even though we are not to live a life of constant "salvation doubt," the Bible clearly teaches is that there is no such thing as "Easy Believe-ism."

It is to our detriment that we have packaged the Gospel in such a way that we get a lot of people to say "yes," to walk the aisle, to say the Sinner's Prayer, and to get baptized (with each person considering their salvation to be a "done deal"). Then we move on to the next victim, uh, I mean convert.

Matthew 7:21-23 encourages us to not take our salvation for granted and to examine our motivation for serving Jesus. Another application of these verses is for us to examine the "works" in our life and make sure that each

of them are done for the proper reasons, i.e. for God's glory.

It is profitable for us to diligently examine and discern our true intentions and motivations for those things we do "in Jesus' Name." God has promised us through His Word that He will reveal to us whether our motives are pure or self-serving.

Hebrews 4:12 - For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (NKJV)

Oftentimes, because of these verses in Matthew, I am asked if there are practical ways that we can examine our life to see if our works, behavior, and attitudes reflect true salvation. That is the reason I have written this book on **the evidence of true salvation**.

I want to look at the things that are the evidence, or fruit, of authentic salvation; and also examine those things that are often mistaken as the fruit of salvation but in reality may or may not be. It is good for us to know these things so that we can live in assurance

that we will never hear those dreadful words "depart from me I never knew you."

In each part of this book, we will look at one characteristic of the Christian life that, when present, is a solid testimony to the authenticity of one's salvation. We will also look at one evidence that can be present in a Christian's life that may or may not denote true saving faith.

Contemplation: Have these verses in Matthew ever caused you to wonder about your salvation? Why do you think the Lord left us with such a harsh verse? Do you consider your salvation secure based on the fact that you have done the right steps, or said a prayer, or been baptized? On what do you base your assurance of salvation? Does your life have evidence of true salvation?

Application: This book will require you to look past the surface with me. This is not a series of lessons on the "steps of salvation," or whether or not Baptism or the "Sinner's Prayer" is the moment of salvation. In His Word, God has given us some practical and tangible ways to examine and measure the authenticity of our salvation; but, like most things Godly, it takes

some effort to discover them. But the effort is well worth the pay-off in assurance.

The Evidence of True Salvation: Obedience & Morality

Matthew 7:21-23 - "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' (NKJV)

Assurance of salvation (whether you call it or believe it to be "eternal security" or not) is a blessing that Christians desire for obvious reasons. There are two levels of this assurance: one is intellectual (you are assured that you are saved based on facts from Scripture), and the other is emotional (you feel saved in your heart and feelings).

Intellectual assurance without emotional assurance robs you of joy.

Assurance based on emotions alone is dangerous and deceptive.

But both can be obtained through careful examination of your life, time spent with God, study of the Word, and prayer. Let's review what we have covered so far:

We should examine the motivations behind our service to the Lord to make sure they are done for His glory (Matt 7.21-23; 1 Cor 10.31).

Allow God's Word to search your motivations and intentions to see if they are pure (Heb 4.12).

Diligently monitor and examine your walk with Christ, striving always to change, correct, and conform yourself more closely to His image; working out your salvation with "fear and trembling" (Phil 2.12).

For the purpose of this study let me define two things:

A Proof (Fruit) of Salvation

This is a characteristic or trait in a person's life which confirms that true salvation has indeed occurred.

You cannot hang your hat on a single proof and simply ignore others. If one true "proof" or fruit is present, then the other fruits will

generally be present also; although they may be in various stages of growth and maturity.

A Sign or Indication, but Not Proof

A "sign" or indication in the context of this study is a characteristic that NEITHER proves nor disproves authentic salvation and Christianity.

The unregenerate heart of the sinner may still manifest these signs in some form.

The presence of these characteristics may INDICATE salvation, but doesn't necessarily authenticate true Christianity in the person's life.

Assurance of salvation does not come cheaply. It is a treasure to the soul; and, like treasures, it must be sought out and mined from God's Word. We will look at two characteristics of this assurance, one that is a sure proof of authentic salvation, and another which is a sign, but not a proof. First, the sign:

Good Moral Behavior

The presence of morality in a person's life is an indication that there is a good possibility the person is a Christian, but most certainly not

proof of it. In the world today, there has been a renewed emphasis on morality.

Unfortunately, morality is being openly promoted as the way to salvation. Many large religious organizations today promote goodness (and allegiance to their hierarchy) as the way to salvation.

There are famous radio talk show hosts and TV program/entertainment personalities who have become wildly popular by promoting common-sense morality and personal responsibility. While there is no doubt much civil good comes from this, and that is commendable, it also represents one of the most dangerous and insidious forms of deception.

The religion of morality is a dangerous trend in the world today, leading millions to believe that being good is the path to Heaven.

The idea is promoted that being good is the "end-all be-all" and that a loving God will have no choice but to accept the "good" person into the Kingdom of Heaven because there is no possible way that a "loving God" could send a moral person to Hell for all eternity.

The deception of "morality equals salvation" is very, very dangerous. After all, why does a good person need to be saved? Why does a good person need to admit they are a wicked sinner destined for Hell? Why does a good person have to submit themselves to the Lord Jesus Christ when the whole world agrees that they deserve to be approved of by God? Very, very dangerous.

The theme verse for this book addresses this issue quite well (Matthew 7:21-23). Notice the good, moral things that are claimed by those whom Jesus does not know: casting out demons and doing great wonders. A modern-day version of this might be something like fighting crime and injustice, feeding the hungry, saving the environment, and curing cancer.

While these things can be laudable, they do not earn you a place in Heaven. However, the vast majority of people uninterested in God would typically be uninterested in giving their life for civil good, so the presence of these good works and morality MIGHT be an indicator of a person who is saved, but certainly not a proof of it.

In Matthew 19:16-21, we find the parable of the rich young ruler who asked Jesus how he could receive eternal life. Jesus replied and told him that he needed to keep the law - the Ten Commandments. At that point, the young man was happy because he had indeed obeyed the rules and been a good moral person. But then Jesus reached down into his heart and addressed his sinful nature by telling him that money was more important to him than God.

The young man went away sad because even though he was moral in his conduct, his heart was not regenerated and he was not ready to give up his life for Jesus Christ. His morality in this case was not an evidence of his salvation, but a manifestation of his personal pride.

Be careful of the growing "religion of morality" that is sweeping the world today.

It is the pinnacle of human pride to declare that being good makes us deserving of God and that He would not dare deny us what we have earned through our "goodness."

Obedience to God

While morality might be a sign of salvation, obedience to God's Word is a proof or fruit of

authentic Christianity supported in numerous Scriptures. Let's take a look at a few verses (emphasis mine):

*John 15:14 - You are My friends **if you do whatever I command you.** (NKJV)*

*1 Peter 1:22-23 - Since you have purified your souls **in obeying the truth** through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, (NKJV)*

*1 John 2:3-6 - Now by this we know that we know Him, **if we keep His commandments.** He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. (NKJV)*

*1 John 2:17 - And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who **does the will of God** abides forever. (NKJV)*

*1 John 3:22-23 - And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we **keep His***

commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment. (NKJV)

1 John 5:2 - By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and **keep His commandments**. (NKJV)

The Apostle John writes over and over again (1John) that obedience is a key indicator of true salvation. Why? Because genuine, sustained obedience to God's Word is impossible before salvation when we were "slaves to sin" (Romans 6). So the very fact that we are CAPABLE of a growing, consistent, and authentic level of obedience to God is a proof of true salvation. And one final verse:

Hebrews 5:9 - And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who **obey Him**, (NKJV)

Jesus is the author, the writer, the creator of eternal salvation for all those who do what? Be good? No. For those that obey Him.

Being a good, moral person is only truly good if it comes from a regenerated (Titus 3.5) heart

responding in obedience to God's call for righteousness. Morality is an indicator of possible salvation, but not proof of it. On the other hand, consistent and growing obedience to God's Word is a sure proof of authentic salvation.

Contemplation: Are you a "good" person? Do you in any way think this obligates God to bless you more, favor you more, or "save" you more? What does the Bible say about man's ability to be "good" in and of himself? Is your life characterized by a growing and consistent effort to obey God's Word? Do you long for and have an intense desire to obey God despite failing often?

Application: It is common that as Christians we have no problem believing the Bible when it tells us that "mankind" has a sinful heart and is incapable of being good. But when it comes to believing that about ourselves individually, well that's a different story. Before we are saved, we are INCAPABLE of any righteous act (Romans). After salvation, we are now truly "good" because God empowers us to be so, and it is for His glory and through Christ alone; manifested in our obedience to His Word.

The Evidence of True Salvation: Selflessness & Knowledge

Matthew 7:21-23 - "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' (NKJV)

I want to begin this section by reminding you that this is not a lesson on how to be saved or the steps of salvation. These are not lessons on whether or not Baptism is essential, or whether or not the Sinner's Prayer is Biblical, or at what point salvation actually occurs.

This series of lessons is meant for the person who already believes that they are a Christian and desires to authenticate that belief. We know from Scripture that many people will claim to be Christians, and even look and act like Christians, but may not truly be saved (Matthew 7:21-23;13:38). This series presents

the Biblical standard by which we can measure the authenticity of our professed Christianity. Let's review what we have covered so far:

We should examine the motivations behind our service to the Lord to make sure they are done for His glory (Matt 7:21-23; 1 Cor 10:31).

Allow God's Word to search your motivations and intentions to see if they are pure (Heb 4:12).

Diligently monitor and examine your walk with Christ, striving always to change, correct, and conform yourself more closely to His image; working out your salvation with "fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12).

Morality & Obedience

Good deeds and **morality** might be an indication of salvation, but they are not proof.

The "religion of morality" is growing in popularity today and states that being good earns you acceptance by God. It does not (Matt 7:21-23). Faith without good morality or works is dead (James 2:17), but morality without Christ leads to eternal death (John 14:6).

A consistent growth and desire to **obey God** is evidence of authentic salvation. The spirit of man is incapable of this (Romans 6) before the heart is regenerated (Titus 3:5), so the presence of genuine obedience is proof of true salvation (John 15:14; 1 Peter 1:22-23; 1 John 2:17; 1 John 3:22-23; 1 John 5:2; Hebrews 5:9).

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Intellectual assurance without emotional assurance robs you of joy.

Assurance based on emotions alone is dangerous and deceptive.

But both can be obtained through careful examination of your life, time spent with God, study of the Word, and prayer. We will examine the fruit of selflessness and the signs of knowledge. Let's look at knowledge first.

Religious Knowledge

There is no doubt that Bible knowledge can certainly be an indication of someone who is saved. There is also no doubt that Bible knowledge alone does not make one a true

Christian. We live in an era where resources and information about the Bible are abundant and increasing. We have endless books, teachers, television programs, radio shows, and church events infusing us with more and more Bible knowledge every day.

It would seem logical to think that with this incredible increase of scriptural knowledge we would see a corresponding and parallel increase in obedience.

Daniel 12:4 - "But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase." (NKJV)

I know that there are many different stances on eschatology (the Biblical study of the end of the world, the "end times"). It is not my intention to address those doctrines in this lesson, but I quickly wanted to note this verse in Daniel because a very large segment of Christianity believes that an overall, exponential increase in knowledge is a sign that the Lord will return soon. Even if you don't believe this verse is a commentary on the last days of this earth from a doctrinal standpoint, it still has a practical and interesting application.

**Who can argue that we have masses
of highly "informed" people
running to and fro today, lost concerning
the meaning of life.**

Disseminated through technology and information sources, we have more religions, philosophies, opinions, and experts than ever before filling our minds via print, television, movie screens, the Internet, and radio. And yet it is plain to see that with the increase of knowledge **the confusion in the heart of man only grows more intense** as he "runs to and fro" looking for the meaning and purpose of life.

Romans 1:20-23 - For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man-and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. (NKJV)

The apostle Paul tells us that a person can clearly see God in creation, can understand that God exists through the things that exist because of Him, and can perceive God's eternal nature. Because of this fact, no man can be excused for rejecting God. God has put before us the plain knowledge of His existence and yet the majority of humankind will become "futile in their thoughts" and will have their "foolish hearts darkened." They have "knowledge" but not salvation.

Knowledge about God - to know that He exists, to know what His Word says, and to increase in that knowledge - may very well be an indicator of a person who is saved, but it is clearly not proof that a person is saved.

Selflessness & Serving

If I could sum up the life of Christianity and what characterizes a true Christian, I would have to choose the word "selfless." The giving up of your own life for Christ's; to crucify the flesh; to be a living sacrifice... **every moment of living for Jesus is a decision to deny self and obey God.**

The characteristic of selflessness is the most difficult and unnatural trait that we will ever try

to develop. It goes against the very basic nature of our sinful hearts. Our flesh will use any trickery, deception, or confusion to make us believe that we are being selfless when in fact we are serving self.

1 Corinthians 11:1 - Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. (NKJV)

Of course, Jesus Christ is the ultimate example of selflessness. He was the eternal holy God who chose to take on the form of lowly man (Philippians 2) and even after living a sinless, perfect life chose to sacrifice Himself for a world that rejected Him, ridiculed Him, mocked Him, and crucified Him.

Being a true Christian is being what? It's being "like Christ." And what better proof of being a Christian than demonstrating one of the greatest qualities of Christ -- selflessness. Consider these verses which mark a life of selflessness (emphasis mine):

*1 John 3:14 - We know that we have passed from death to life, **because we love the brethren.** He who does not love his brother abides in death. (NKJV)*

1 John 4:7 - Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and **everyone who loves** is born of God and knows God. (NKJV)

Romans 12:10 - **Be kindly affectionate** to one another with brotherly love, in honor **giving preference** to one another; (NKJV)

Romans 12:1 - I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you **present your bodies a living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. (NKJV)

Matthew 20:28 - just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, **but to serve**, and to give His life a ransom for many." (NKJV)

Colossians 3:24 - knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you **serve the Lord Christ**. (NKJV)

Matthew 20:16 - So the **last will be first**, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen." (NKJV)

Luke 9:48 - and said to them, "Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is **least among you** all will be great." (NKJV)

True selflessness is all the more a concrete proof of true salvation because we are incapable of selflessness (righteousness - Romans 6) before God supernaturally changes our heart (Titus 3:5). Before salvation, we are slaves to Self. For those folks who claim Christianity but have not been born again (John 3:5-8), they will be unable to have consistent victory in this area.

A person who professes Christianity but is not truly saved will have a life that is characterized by the consistent motivation to look out for themselves, to gain the advantage for themselves, and to generally seek what is good for themselves over what is good for others. And no matter how hard this person tries to cover up the "self" motivation, it will always show through.

On the other hand, a true Christian will certainly fail and have moments of selfishness, but **overall** their life will be characterized by an increasing, tangible growth in the area of serving others, denying themselves, and preferring others over themselves. For the genuinely saved, selfishness will rear its ugly head occasionally, but selfLESSness will be the victor over the long haul.

Bible knowledge could be an indicator of a person who is saved but most certainly is not proof. True selflessness however is only possible for the true believer and in that sense is concrete proof of authentic salvation.

Contemplation: Do you know a lot about the Bible? Does your life line up with that knowledge, marked by purity and service and selflessness? Do you find yourself frequently arguing doctrine and positions on Bible issues even while just as frequently being in conflict with others? Do others see you as a selfless servant, or a Bible bully?

Application: We have endless sources of Bible knowledge and far too often we spend more time arguing doctrinal positions rather than selflessly giving up our lives for each other. Don't get me wrong. Doctrine is important and I have my own strong convictions as well. But if we are a lot better about arguing Calvinism, Baptism, or Pre-Millennialism than we are about loving, serving, sacrificing, and denying Self... then we are missing the boat. **There is a balance to this, as in all things.** If we are "love, love, love" all the while sacrificing sound truth, Biblical knowledge, and doctrinal integrity, we are no better off than if we know the Bible

cover to cover but are missing selfless Christ-like love.

The Evidence of True Salvation: Conviction & Repentance

Matthew 7:21-23 - "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' (NKJV)

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Diligently monitor and examine your walk with Christ, striving always to change, correct, and conform yourself more closely to His image; working out your salvation with "fear and trembling" (Phil 2:12).

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Good deeds and **morality** might be an indication of salvation, but they are not proof.

The "religion of morality" is growing in popularity today and states that being good earns you acceptance by God. It does not (Matt 7:21-23). Faith without good morality or works is dead (James 2:17), but morality without Christ leads to eternal death (John 14:6).

A consistent growth and desire to **obey God** is evidence of authentic salvation. The spirit of man is incapable of this (Romans 6) before the heart is regenerated (Titus 3:5), so the

presence of genuine obedience is proof of true salvation (John 15:14; 1 Peter 1:22-23; 1 John 2:17; 1 John 3:22-23; 1 John 5:2; Hebrews 5:9).

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While knowledge of God and Scripture could certainly indicate salvation, it is by no means proof of it. The world has always been filled with religious people, even "Bible religious" who are clean on the outside and rotten on the inside (Matt 23:27).

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authenticate true Christianity in the person's life.

Assurance of salvation (whether you call it or believe it to be "eternal security" or not) is a blessing that Christians desire for obvious reasons. There are two levels of this assurance; one is intellectual (you know based on facts from Scripture that you are saved), and the other is emotional (you feel saved in your heart and emotions).

Intellectual assurance without emotional assurance robs you of joy.

Assurance based on emotions alone is dangerous and deceptive.

But both can be obtained through careful examination of your life, time spent with God, study of the Word, and prayer. We will next examine conviction about sin and Godly repentance from sin. Let's look at conviction first.

Conviction About Sin

At first thought, you might think someone who is convicted of sin would have to be a Christian. But it is plain enough that the unsaved, or even very young children, oftentimes know when they have done

something wrong. Being created in God's image, we have a sort of natural sense of many things that are right and wrong, and along with general knowledge of societal rules and laws, we all have a sense of sin regardless of whether we are saved.

A thief knows that stealing is wrong and, at least initially, will probably feel guilty about it. An adulterer knows that sleeping with another man's wife is wrong and, until his conscience is seared, will probably experience guilt or conviction. A sinner may sense deep guilt after hearing a Preacher, knowing that he is guilty of the things he is hearing.

**Hearing God's Word may convict us,
even frighten us,
but conviction is no proof
of genuine salvation.**

In Acts 24:25, we find a man named Felix (a Roman government official) who talked with Paul about righteousness, self-control, and the Day of Judgment. Felix became afraid, obviously convicted over what Paul was saying; but instead of responding in humility he sent Paul away and told him he would call him later. On top of that, despite his conviction over Paul's words, Felix was hoping Paul would

give him money in order to be released from jail. Felix had access to Paul for two years but his conviction over what Paul had said never changed him.

My favorite example of conviction without salvation is that of Judas Iscariot. Judas, being one of the original 12 called by Jesus, spent three years in daily contact with the Lord. His betrayal of Christ is familiar enough to all of us, but have you ever stopped and thought about how convicted Judas was of what he did?

Matthew 27:5 - Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. (NKJV)

Judas had gotten the money he wanted. He had been stealing from the disciples' treasury all along. But in the end, he became severely convicted of what he had done. He threw down the money and went out and hanged himself. You can't get much sorrier (convicted) than that, can you?

Doesn't repentance mean feeling really bad and being sincerely sorry for the sin you've committed?

At first glance, we might think that Judas had repented of his sin. Obviously, he was deeply grieved and remorseful for what he had done. Isn't that what repentance is all about? In contrast to Peter, whom we will look at in a moment, **Judas was sorry but did not repent.** Judas did not want to do the hard work of true repentance. In keeping with his character, while he was truly convicted and grieved over his sin, he chose the route of "self" and responded with a quick and easy way out by killing himself (it became apparent that it was NOT the easy way out about one second after he died).

Judas did not possess the humility and true repentance that should have taken him to the feet of the One whom he had betrayed. So remember: conviction, even deep and sorrowful conviction to the point of death, is not a true proof of salvation. True repentance on the other hand is a proof of salvation.

True Repentance From Sin

God desires true repentance from each person. It is not enough for us to perform religious acts or even feel sorry about our sinfulness. We must turn to God in humility and admit our sinfulness... but even that is still one

step short. **We must turn away from our sin** and turn to God.

Matthew 9:13 - But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." (NKJV)

So what exactly is repentance? There are a couple of different words in Greek used to describe repentance:

metamelomai is a verb that means to change your mind because of regret or remorse over sin, but may or may not include a change of heart. This is the kind of repentance or conviction that Judas had.

metanoia means to change your mind or change your life or purpose in light of knowledge that you have gained. This speaks of true repentance and a real change in your life in light of the promised forgiveness of sin.

True Biblical repentance consists of:

- A genuine realization of one's sinfulness manifested in a feeling of guilt; (Ps 119:28; Ps 51:4)
- A longing for or need of God's mercy in light of the just condemnation we deserve for sin; (Ps 109:21; Ps 130:4)

- A hatred for sin; denouncing and turning away from sin; (2Chr 6:26; 1Thess 1:9; Acts 3:19)
- And turning towards God in a persistent effort to obey God and not continue to sin. (1John)

2 Corinthians 7:10 - For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. (NKJV)

Peter is a perfect example of true repentance. When he denied Christ, he was grieved and exceedingly sorrowful (Matt 26:75). But unlike Judas, he did not demonstrate his sorrow with a selfish act. Instead, he turned to the One whom he had sinned against (Jesus; who is the ultimate target of ALL sin) and placed his trust in the mercy of his Savior. In keeping with the genuineness of his repentance, Peter then spent the rest of his life serving and obeying God.

Repentance does not include a "cheap forgiveness" in exchange for a moment of sorrow with no intention of changing our behavior.

The apostle Peter demonstrated clearly all of the elements of true repentance: conviction,

sorrow, and acknowledgment of sin, submission to God, turning in faith to God, trusting in the mercy of God, and a change of heart and life demonstrated by his desire to obey God from that moment on.

The Apostle John tells us very bluntly that if we do not confess our sin and turn from it - we simply are not saved (emphasis mine).

*1 John 1:8-10 - If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. (NKJV)*

*1 John 2:3-6 - Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. **By this we know that we are in Him.** He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. (NKJV)*

The combination of admitting our sin, confessing it, and receiving forgiveness,

followed by a continual, growing effort to keep God's commandments rather than sin, is what true repentance is all about.

If you are simply sorry about your sin, but in reality there is never any real change in your behavior or life, then your conviction over sin is **not** evidence of genuine salvation. On the other hand, if your sorrow and guilt over sin lead you to confess that sin to God, and turn away from your sin towards God in a sincere effort to obey Him... then you are demonstrating true repentance - which is an authentic proof of your salvation.

Contemplation: Are you sorry over your sin? Do you feel guilt when you know you have done something wrong, something that violates God's Word? Does your life change as a result of it? Or do you simply accept some false form of "easy forgiveness" and then go about living your life the same way? Do you go ahead and sin NOW thinking "God will forgive me" later? Do you think your later repentance is genuine?

Application: Many people today who profess Christ want the forgiveness that follows repentance, without the "change of behavior" aspect of repentance. In other words, they want to continue in sin but deceive

themselves by thinking "God will forgive me."
God does not forgive sin that falls short of being truly repented of, which includes confession, turning away from the sin, and doing your best (with God's empowerment) to not commit that sin anymore. Repentance does not include a "cheap forgiveness" in exchange for a moment of sorrow, knowing full well we have no intention of changing.

The Evidence of True Salvation: Religious Acts & Separation

Matthew 7:21-23 - "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!' (NKJV)

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But both can be obtained through careful examination of your life, time spent with God, study of the Word, and prayer.

We will next examine religious acts and separation from the world. Let's look at religious acts first.

Religious Acts

Oftentimes when you ask someone if they're saved you will hear a list of answers that point to some sort of religious act or involvement that is offered as proof of salvation.

- I go to church every week.
- I "accepted Jesus" when I was young.
- I'm a Catholic.
- My family is Baptist.
- I "asked Jesus into my heart".
- I said the Sinner's Prayer.

- I've been baptized.

Obviously, most of these answers don't necessarily mean that a person is NOT saved, but none of these answers are proof that a person is genuinely saved.

Note: The point of this lesson is not whether or not baptism is necessary or essential to salvation. I would hope that everyone would agree that the actual act of baptism, the immersing of someone underwater, is not WHAT literally saves a person (the blood of Jesus Christ does) even though I know many Christians believe that baptism is the actual MOMENT a person is saved.

A person who goes to church every week, or has "accepted Jesus," or has been baptized, may very well be truly saved but too often Christians point to a religious act or religious experience as the grounds for their salvation rather than being able to articulate how the sacrifice of Jesus Christ paid for their sin.

Significant religious involvement is also not proof of salvation. Our theme verse makes it very clear that people can be extremely active in religion or church and still not be saved. The Church will always have those who

appear to be saved and are not (Matthew 13:40); those who are involved in the activity of the Lord's work (Matthew 25:1-10); those who perform many works in Jesus' Name (Matthew 7:21-23), and those who are involved in the Church but not wholly committed (Revelation 3:16)... and yet still are not saved.

My point is twofold. First, for you personally, make sure that you can defend and articulate your salvation based on the true Gospel message - that you are a helpless sinner (Matthew 5:3), drawn by the mercy of God (John 6:44) and saved by the shed blood of Jesus Christ sacrificed to pay the penalty (Matthew 6:28) that you owed God because of your sin (Roman 6:23).

Secondly, when you are evangelizing or discipling it is important to have the other person clearly articulate their salvation rather than accepting some answer such as "I went forward at a revival when I was young." Remember, you are dealing with the eternal destination of the person. If they are truly saved, they will not mind if you ask them to more fully explain why they believe they are saved. If they are not saved, then you are

doing them a favor by asking them to explain what they mean by such a statement and helping them to discover whether or not they have genuine salvation.

A religious act or experience may indicate that a person is saved but most certainly is not proof of it. However, separation from the world (sanctification) is.

Separation from the World (Sanctification)

Living righteously instead of worldly is solid proof of authentic salvation. There are many reasons why, but one reason is because it is impossible for an unsaved person to live righteously, consistently, and separated from the ways of the world. Why?

- Without true faith is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6).
- Before true salvation we are slaves to sin (John 8:34; Romans 6:20).
- No one can be righteous before salvation (Romans 3:10).

The very fact that a person is capable of consistently living in a righteous manner is proof of salvation because only the saved can live a sanctified life. We now have the Spirit of God rather than the spirit of the world (2

Corinthians 2:12) and if we remain friends with the world, then we are going against God (James 4:4).

1 John 2:15-17 - Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world-the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life-is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. (NKJV)

The things of the world are listed here in three categories:

The lust of the flesh - this is the nature of sin we are born with that longs for the things that are opposed to God. The natural man rebels against God and everything about this world seeks to attract a person through the lust of the flesh.

The lust of the eyes - it is through what we see that we become attracted to the things of the world. Just as the forbidden fruit was pleasant to the eye of Eve in the garden, the forbidden fruit of sinful pleasure is still pleasant to our eyes. In this age of pervasive media, the lust of

the eyes is fed a constant diet of immorality, covetousness, greed, and sensuality.

The pride of life - this is the idea that somehow we are in control instead of God and we are going to display those things in our life which demonstrate that fact: our success, achievements, and possessions. When Godliness decreases, the pride of life increases as man becomes haughty and arrogant, lovers of themselves (2 Timothy 3:2).

We have to live in this world, and share the Gospel with this world, but we do not have to be a part of this world (in other words: we don't have to live like the world). Everything about this world is sin cursed and it will pass away in the end. We are to live separated from what the world loves, from what the world does, and from what the world is; while consistently growing and becoming more like Christ (sanctification).

Contemplation: If someone were to ask you today "are you saved?", what is your response? Can you respond with an articulate scriptural answer, or is your response something like "well, I go to church"? Is your life an example of living in the world but separate from the ways of the world? If someone were

to spend a few hours with you, would they have any idea that you are a Christian? Can they tell the difference between you and an unsaved person?

Application: If we claim salvation based on anything other than the shed blood of Jesus Christ who paid the penalty that we rightly owe to God for sin, we are claiming salvation falsely. Again, this is not a statement about "how" (what steps) a person is saved, or "when" (what moment) a person is saved, but WHAT saves a person. And what saves a person is the shed blood of Jesus Christ paying for the sins of the repentant believer.

If you claim Christianity but look like the world, talk like the world, act like the world, want what the world wants, live the way the world lives, and there is virtually no difference between you and the world... are you part of the world, or part of Christ?

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Religious Acts & Separation From the World

(Sanctification)

A religious act or experience may indicate that a person is saved but most certainly is not proof of it.

Going to church, or simply going through the motions of salvation, does not mean a person's heart has truly turned to God.

Separation from the world, i.e., becoming holy (sanctification) means denying the sinful nature:

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Self vs. Others

If I had to sum up proof (fruit) of salvation it might be stated like this:

The truly saved person denies Self and is focused on others.

Of course the primary "others" is God and His Beloved Son, Jesus Christ. After that, the truly saved person focuses on the needs and desires of other humans including his family, friends, other Christians, and even his enemies. After being saved, I believe you can most accurately sum up the Christian life by saying that it is a life-long process of "I must decrease, and Christ must increase" (John 3.30).

I want to wrap up this section with a list of practical examples of this, emphasizing the difference between someone focused on "Self" and a truly saved person focusing on "others":

A person focused on **Self** is self-conscious.

A Christian focused on **others** isn't concerned with self.

A person focused on **Self** compares themselves with others.

A Christian focused on **others** compares themselves to Christ.

A person focused on **Self** generalizes their sin.

A Christian focused on **others** is specific in recognizing personal sin.

A person focused on **Self** has a hard time seeking forgiveness.

A Christian focused on **others** craves forgiveness for their sin.

A person focused on **Self** is protective of their rights, reputation, and time.

A Christian focused on **others** sacrifices their personal needs for the needs of others.

A person focused on **Self** is assertive, self-sufficient, and independent.

A Christian focused on **others** is humble, needs accountability, and is dependent on Christ.

A person focused on **Self** rarely misses a chance to promote themselves - either directly or subtly.

A Christian focused on **others** rarely misses a chance to promote Christ and glorify God.

A person focused on **Self** is sorry because they got caught in sin.

A Christian focused on **others** is convicted, repentant, and turns away from sin.

A person focused on **Self** desires to be successful and noticed.

A Christian focused on **others** desires others' success and welfare; and gives them recognition.

A person focused on **Self** focuses on the shortcomings of everyone around them.

A Christian focused on **others** is painfully aware of their own sinfulness and frailty while being very forgiving about others' faults.

A person focused on **Self** is quick to be defensive and blame others.

A Christian focused on **others** is quick to take responsibility and look for their own faults.

A person focused on **Self** pursues recognition and honor.

A Christian focused on **others** pursues service and submissiveness.

A person focused on **Self** needs to be appreciated and complimented in order to not get discouraged.

A Christian focused on **others** relies on the appreciation and acceptance of God for encouragement.

A person focused on **Self** thinks about how valuable they are to God and what they can offer Him.

A Christian focused on **others** knows they have absolutely nothing to offer God outside of what God does through them.

A person focused on **Self** is evasive and protective of their private life in order to look as good as possible.

A Christian focused on **others** confesses their sinfulness, is transparent, and is vulnerable about their weakness.

A person focused on **Self** believes that God is lucky to have them around, and so is their Church and ministry.

A Christian focused on **others** realizes that they don't deserve to even be a part of God's work; but God is merciful and good.

A person focused on **Self** keeps his spiritual needs hidden and his achievements displayed.

A Christian focused on **others** proclaims his spiritual needs honestly and keeps his achievements between him and God.

A person focused on **Self** waits for the other person to come and makes things right.

A Christian focused on **others** goes and makes things right first, no matter the cost.

A person focused on **Self** doesn't give a lot of thought about the consequences of their sin.

A Christian focused on **others** is grieved over what sin does to them and those around them.

A person focused on **Self** is afraid that people will find out what type of person they really are.

A Christian focused on **others** knows that we are all sinners and hates his sinfulness.

A person focused on **Self** is blind about their true spiritual condition.

A Christian focused on **others** constantly evaluates their spiritual condition in light of God's Word.

A person focused on **Self** is focused on Self.

A Christian focused on **others** is focused anything but Self, at all costs.

My prayer is that this book will help you evaluate the nature of your salvation first (are you truly saved...); and secondly, help make you aware of those "fruits" that should be present in your life if you really are a Christian. If you walk like the world, talk like the world, spend your time and money like the world, dress like the world, enjoy what the world enjoys, and want what the world wants.... does it make sense to believe you are a Christian?

Christians look like Christ, act like Christ; walk, talk, and think like Christ.... what does the mirror show you today? The world or Christ?

Contemplation: If your friends and family were asked, would they say you are focused on Self, or others? Would that differ from your opinion of yourself? Have you asked God His opinion?

Application: There are four versions of you: 1) What you think of yourself; 2) What you think others think of you; 3) What others actually think of you, and 4) the truth about you that only God knows. Obviously, only the fourth version is reality and so there is only one way of knowing what you really are... ask God.

If you claim Christianity but look like the world, talk like the world, act like the world, want what the world wants, live the way the world lives, and there is virtually no difference between you and the world... are you part of the world, or part of Christ?

Saving Faith: Tests & Evidence

1 John 5:13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.

I was recently asked the question, "how can you really know you are genuinely saved?" This is not a question about "once saved always saved" (eternal security). This question, more fully would go something like this:

"Is there any way I can look at my own life and person, and know for sure whether or not I'm genuinely saved?"

The answer is categorically, YES.

Like everything else in life we want to prove, determine, objectively evaluate, or figure out,

we can consider the EVIDENCE of our life and then look at some TESTS revealed in Scripture to determine if we have genuine saving faith or not.

Sometimes we think everything about spirituality and faith is mysterious and unknowable... just a blind faith that we have to "hope" is on the right track. Of course, there are things that require "faith" (trust in things "not seen") but it's never BLIND faith. It's faith based on evidence and facts.

Does this mean that genuine saving faith is an intellectual process only? Hardly.

I've never understood man's tendency to want to say faith is either all "heart" or all "intellect." We are created in God's image and our faith consists of all of our created being: intellect, heart, emotion, and logic. It's not all or nothing, and no part of any of these negates the other. Nor does one person's tendency to lean towards a certain aspect mean they are not using the other. For example, I personally lean naturally more towards the "intellect and logic" approach to my faith. That's just how God made me. I've been accused at times of leaning on my Bible knowledge and intellect

to "save me" rather than faith and love.
Ridiculous.

Just as ridiculous as me saying that a person who naturally leans more towards the emotional experiential aspects of faith is "leaning on" their feelings for salvation rather than the facts. It is common though, that one side or the other tends to think THEIR approach to faith is the "right" approach (intellect or "heart").

Can a person mistake intellectual knowledge for saving faith? Of course. Can a person mistake "feeling" for saving faith? Of course. But it's not a foregone conclusion that either are true. The "intellectual" person cannot assume the "experiential person" is not solidly grounded; nor can the experientially predisposed person assume the intellectual only has head knowledge but not heart knowledge.

God made us all different. We each approach our faith according to how God the Creator made us. Having said that, both the intellectual and the experiential Christian can look to clear teaching in Scripture that reveals to us both EVIDENCES and TESTS to help us

know if we are on the right track, i.e. "genuinely saved."

It is these evidences and tests that I want to explore over the next several sections.

There really is no greater or more important question than: "Am I genuinely saved?" This is probably the most common and probing question I get. If you know friends and family that would benefit from this series of lessons, please send them a link to this book today.

Saving Faith: Tests & Evidence That are NOT Proof

1 John 5:13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.

We are answering the question: "Can a Christian know for sure they have genuine saving faith?"

The answer is YES! The same way we can prove other things: tests & evidence. Of course, we can only prove this to OURSELVES with an open and honest heart. I cannot prove it for you and you cannot prove it for me. God does not leaving us hanging with a blind hope that we might be saved. He gives

us plenty of objective measurements to evaluate this in our own heart.

We are going to look at things that WILL BE TRUE for the genuine Christian, but are NOT proof of genuine saving faith because they can be true for the unsaved as well.

Isn't that a waste of time though? Not at all. All the things we will look at today SHOULD be part of your life if you are genuinely saved. But by these standards alone, you cannot have assurance of genuine faith.

Things That Will Be True About a Genuine Christian But Don't PROVE You Are a Christian:

Good Works

A person can be part of and engage in all manners of apparent good works and still not be saved. We can easily see examples of all sorts of people, religious or not, that spend their life engaged in good works.

In the end, God will test each man's work with "fire" and only those works done for and by the righteousness of God that is given to the genuinely saved will survive. The rest will be

burned up, shown to be worthless and dead. Just as a straw house may provide some temporary benefit, if it is put to the test, it is easily destroyed.

1 Co 3:12-13: Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. (NKJV)

Good works done by the unsaved are like that straw house. There is some temporary benefit and result, but in the end it will be proven worthless eternally.

However, good works are absolutely part of the genuine Christian life. Some argue that emphasizing good works appeals to man's pride, or is an effort to earn salvation. That can be true of course, but for the genuine Believer, good works are the outward manifestation of a changed heart. Good works are the manifestation of appreciation for our salvation and showing of God's love to a hurting world. Oh yeah... we are commanded to do good works too, so that should end that argument (read the book of James too):

1 Ti 6:18: Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, (NKJV)

A Point of Decision

Often we point to some act, decision, or moment that appears to prove our genuine faith. I said the Sinner's Prayer; I was baptized; I went forward at a revival to receive Jesus into my heart.

Of course, some point of decision WILL be true for all the genuinely saved, but a point of decision is not proof of salvation as evidenced by the multitudes of "decisions" that are never accompanied by any long-term transformation of their life. Decisions can be made from emotion, intellect, coercion, or impulsiveness, with no accompanying spiritual motivation.

Religious Interest or Ministry Involvement

Being interested in God or active in Christian ministry will be true of genuine Christians, but is not PROOF of genuine salvation. I don't have to explain the common experience of knowing folks who are routinely engaged in ministry or religious activity who are OBVIOUSLY not true Believers, or over the long haul prove

they were not as their real life and real motivations come to light.

The Bible even tells us about wolves in sheep's clothing, tares among the wheat, and false teachers who all will appear to be engaged in the business of the Kingdom. In Matt 25:1-10, the parable of the virgins, they were all participating in the wedding party, but in the end, the bridegroom did not recognize them as being included. In Matt 13:38-43, the tares are sown amongst the wheat and look like wheat but in the end will be separated and burned away.

The Bible makes is abundantly clear, and indeed warns us, that there will always be "fake Christians" who give appearance of genuine faith, and most probably even believe they really are saved (as opposed to malicious pretending).

Morality or Goodness

Morality and goodness are certainly true of genuine Christians, but the unsaved are capable of understanding right and wrong, and engaging in civil good. People who seem to lead hedonistic or even evil lives can at times show an understanding and response to

what is "good." Even death-row murderers abhor pedophiles and rapists. Just about every person is capable to some degree of being "good" and grasping morality.

The rich young ruler was a shining example of goodness. A stalwart citizen, a religious man, good in every way... but still lost:

Mt 19:16-26: Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus said to His disciples,

"Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (NKJV)

I would guess this unsaved man was actually "good-er" than most of us. But he was unsaved because his heart was not transformed and he valued something more highly than God.

If we have genuine saving faith, then goodness and high morals WILL be true of us but they are not PROOF of genuine saving faith.

Knowledge of the Facts

Having a working knowledge of Christian facts, the Gospel message, or Biblical education is true for the genuinely saved, but can be true of the unsaved too. Religious organizations, colleges, and churches can be filled with people who KNOW the right things but have not been transformed by them. The

Bible tells us clearly of multitudes of people who should and do know about God intellectually and still reject Him:

Ro 1:20-21: For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. (NKJV)

We all know people who "know" about Jesus, who "know" the Gospel, who "know" the Truth, but still reject or ignore it. You must have the right knowledge to have genuine saving faith, but that knowledge alone is no proof of genuine saving faith.

Contrition or Conviction About Sin

A person can be sorry about their sin, recognize it, and even try to do something about it without being genuinely saved. It is a fleshly act done in human power and will ultimately fail (just as all our decisions, convictions, and efforts done separate from God's power ultimately fail).

Often we see people aware of their sin who try some human act of restitution, sacrifice, or penance in an attempt to satisfy their genuine guilt and shame. While it seems selfless on the surface, it is in reality totally self-centered because it is an attempt to merit grace by our own acts/choices of contrition. It is ultimately prideful because it declares "I can pay for sin my own way, not God's."

Paul spoke the truth to Felix and he obviously was convicted about it, but told Paul to get lost:

Ac 24:25: Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you." (NKJV)

Personal Feeling of Assurance

A genuine Christian can experience true assurance of salvation (that's what this lesson is about) but even the unsaved can wrongly be "sure" they are saved because they are basing it on the wrong test, the wrong evidence, or on the wrong reasons.

In Matt 23, the religious leaders were SURE of their standing with God for all the wrong

reasons: self-righteousness, birth, knowledge, privilege, etc. We can be SURE of our salvation based on many erroneous "proofs":

- I prayed a prayer.
- I was baptized.
- I'm part of the right group, church, or organization.
- Because of my family background.
- I've always been told I was saved.
- I really sincerely FEEL I am saved.
- Someone else says I am saved.
- Anecdotal evidence (my life is going well, so God must be pleased.)

All the things we've looked at in this section are things that WILL be true of genuine saving faith, but are not PROOF of genuine saving faith. The unsaved can exhibit these things as well. Next, we will look at the evidence of genuine saving faith.

Saving Faith: Tests & Evidence That ARE Proof

1 John 5:13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.

We are answering the question: "Can a Christian know for sure they have genuine saving faith?" The answer is YES. The Bible has many "tests" for us to apply and says much about the evidence that will be present in the life of the genuinely saved.

Last chapter, we looked at things that will be present in the lives of those who are saved, but do not by themselves prove that salvation is genuine. Now let's look at those things which ARE evidence of genuine salvation. If the

following list is true in someone's life, then the last chapter's list will be true as well.

Taking up Your Cross:

Matt 10:38: And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. (NKJV)

Taking up your cross is the idea of giving up your life for God. It means that everything else in life become subservient and inferior to the Will of God. Only the genuinely saved are capable of this type of life.

Living Sacrifice:

Rom 12:1: I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. (NKJV)

Dead sacrifices are no longer acceptable to God. As new creatures in Christ, our spirits are re-created, but our sin-cursed body remains. It is to be offered up to God as "living sacrifice," wholly committed to whatever use God may have for it. Only a "new creation" is capable of such a sacrifice.

Love for God:

Rom 8:6-7: 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, nor indeed can be. (NKJV)

The unsaved cannot have a truly spiritual mind. The unsaved mind is at war with God. Only a genuinely saved person can have like-mindedness and love for God.

Luke 10:27: So he answered and said, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.'" (NKJV)

Again, this is only possible for the saved. The unsaved cannot possibly love God with all their heart, mind, and soul, for that is incompatible with being unsaved. Only God grants the power for this love, and He only grants it to His children.

Continual Repentance:

2 Cor 7:10: For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. (NKJV)

Only the truly saved are capable of genuine repentance - which is different from being contrite or sorry about sin (and its consequences). The genuinely saved REPENT and turn from sin because as new creations we are no longer SLAVES to sin.

1 Jn 1:8-10: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. (NKJV)

The genuinely saved do not lie about being sinful. We KNOW we are not sinless because the Truth in us illuminates our sin clearly. We see it, repent of it, and receive forgiveness, all of which is impossible for the unsaved.

The unsaved typically have a high opinion of their goodness and have a hard time seeing their sin, whereas the genuinely saved are grieved because their sin is all too apparent.

A Transformed Life:

Rom 12:2: And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (NKJV)

The truly saved life will experience genuine transformation because God is constantly renewing the mind. God does not indwell the unsaved, so they have no way to genuinely transform their life.

Humility:

James 4:6: But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." (NKJV)

The unsaved are by necessity full of pride. They cannot help it or change it; therefore, they can never have deep, sustaining humility. Genuine humility is a sign of true salvation.

Spiritual Fruit:

Luke 8:15: But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience. (NKJV)

The unregenerate person is incapable of producing good fruit. Presence of measurable and obvious Christian fruit in a life is real evidence of genuine saving faith.

Ga 5:22: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (NKJV)

The consistent presence of the fruit of the Spirit is an obvious evidence of genuine salvation because it is impossible for the slave to sin to display any of these characteristics in more than a token form.

Devotion to God's Glory:

1 Co 10:31: Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (NKJV)

The genuinely saved see ALL their life as an opportunity to glorify God. This is an attitude that the unsaved are incapable of faking (but for a short time, if at all).

Selflessness Towards Others:

1 Jn 4:7: Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. (NKJV)

Only the genuinely saved can consistently love others and put themselves second. The unsaved cannot help but put their own interests first over the long run. It is a difficult effort for the saved, and impossible for the unsaved.

Rom 12:10: Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; (NKJV)

Again, honor and preference are possible only when empowered by God to do so. If these attributes are present in your life, then they are solid evidence of genuine saving faith.

Effective Prayer:

James 5:16: Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. (NKJV)

If you can see the effects of prayer, and prayers being answered in your life, then this is evidence of genuine saving faith. Prayer is effective for the "righteous" man and righteousness only comes after the supernatural rebirth of the spirit.

Obedient Living:

Mt 7:21: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. (NKJV)

It's not the people who SAY the right thing who are truly saved, but the people who DO the right thing; obedience as evidence of salvation is a common thread through all of Scripture.

Can you know if you are genuinely saved? Can you have assurance? Of course. Test yourself, evaluate your life. If these things are true about you, you can have assurance you have genuine saving faith.

Saving Faith: Tests & Evidence

Overview and Summary – Part 4

1 John 5:13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.

"Is there any way I can look at my own life and person, and know for sure whether or not I'm genuinely saved?"

Is it possible to know? Yes...

1 John 5:13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

How?

2 Corinthians 13:5 **Examine** yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. **Test** yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.

Like everything else in life we want to prove, determine, objectively evaluate, or figure out, we can consider the EVIDENCE of our life, and then look at some TESTS revealed in Scripture to determine if we have genuine saving faith or not.

A Word First About Our Approach to Faith

Sometimes we think everything about spirituality and faith is mysterious and unknowable... just a blind faith that we have to "hope" is on the right track. Of course there are things that require "faith" (trust in things "not seen") but it's never BLIND faith. It's faith based on evidence and facts.

Does this mean that genuine saving faith is an intellectual process only? Hardly.

I've never understood man's tendency to want to say faith is either all "heart" or all "intellect." We are created in God's image and our faith consists of all of our created being: intellect,

heart, emotion, and logic. It's not all or nothing, and no part of any of these negates the other. Nor does one person's tendency to lean towards a certain aspect mean they are not using the other. For example, I personally lean naturally more towards the "intellect and logic" approach to my faith. That's just how God made me. I've been accused at times of leaning on my Bible knowledge and intellect to "save me" rather than faith and love. Ridiculous.

Just as ridiculous as me saying that a person who naturally leans more towards the emotional experiential aspects of faith is "leaning on" their feelings for salvation rather than the facts. It is common though, that one side or the other tends to think THEIR approach to faith is the "right" approach (intellect or "heart"). We should not make the mistake of thinking our approach is the RIGHT approach. We should not dismiss or ignore either side, but our God given personalities make us lean one way or the other.

Can a person mistake intellectual knowledge for saving faith?

Of course. Can a person mistake "feeling" for saving faith? Of course. But it's not a foregone conclusion that either are true. The "intellectual" person cannot assume the "experiential person" is not solidly grounded; nor can the experientially predisposed person assume the intellectual only has head knowledge but not heart knowledge.

God made us all different. We each approach our faith according to how God the Creator made us. Having said that, both the intellectual and the experiential Christian can look to clear teaching in Scripture that reveals to us both EVIDENCES and TESTS to help us know if we are on the right track, i.e. "genuinely saved."

Things That Will Be True About a Genuine Christian But Don't PROVE They Are a Christian

Good Works:

A person can be part of and engage in all manners of apparent good works and still not be saved.

1 Cor 3:12-13: Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.
(NKJV)

But, good works are most certainly part of the genuine Christian walk:

1 Tim 6:18: Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share,
(NKJV)

A Point of Decision:

We cannot rely on the fact that we responded to an alter call, prayed some prayer, or even got baptized.

A point of conscious decision to obey Christ is true of all genuine Christians, but the decision itself is not proof of genuine faith, nor are all people who have made a decision genuinely saved; decisions can be made from emotion, intellect, coercion, or impulsiveness with no accompanying spiritual motivation.

Religious Interest or Ministry Involvement:

Being interested in God or active in Christian ministry will be true of genuine Christians, but is not PROOF of genuine salvation.

The Bible even tells us about wolves in sheep's clothing, tares among the wheat, and false teachers who all will appear to be engaged in the business of the Kingdom.

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Morality and goodness are certainly true of genuine Christians, but the unsaved are capable of understanding right and wrong, and engaging in civil good.

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Knowledge of the Facts:

Having a working knowledge of Christian facts, the Gospel message, or Biblical

education is true for the genuinely saved, but can be true of the unsaved too.

Religious organizations, colleges, and churches can be filled with people who KNOW the right things but have not been transformed by them.

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Contrition or Conviction about Sin:

A person can be sorry about their sin, recognize it, and even try to do something about it - without being genuinely saved.

That contrition can be a fleshly act done in human power and will ultimately fail.

Often we see people aware of their sin who try some human act of restitution, sacrifice, or penance in an attempt to satisfy their genuine guilt and shame.

Felix was interested in the truth, and understood his need but chose to put off any real response to it.

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Personal Feeling of Assurance:

A genuine Christian can experience true assurance of salvation (that's what this book is about).

But even the unsaved can wrongly be "sure" they are saved because they are basing it on wrong test, wrong evidence, or on the wrong reasons.

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- Because of my family.
- I've always been told I was.
- I really sincerely FEEL I am.
- Someone else says I am.
- Anecdotal evidence (my life is going well, so God must be pleased).

Things That Are True About Genuine Christians and Are Evidence of Genuine Saving Faith

If the list above is true and the following list is not, there is reason to question if faith is genuine and saving. If the list below is true, then the list above will be true as well.

The following list is impossible for the unsaved to achieve to any real degree or long term consistency. God empowers us and while we may be able to superficially "fake it" for a little while, we will not be able to consistently live the true Christian life without being supernatural indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Taking up Your Cross:

*Mt 10:38: And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.
(NKJV)*

Taking up your cross is the idea of giving up your life for God. It means that everything else in life becomes subservient and inferior to the Will of God. Only the genuinely saved are capable of this type of life.

Living Sacrifice:

Rom 12:1: I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. (NKJV)

Dead sacrifices are no longer acceptable to God. As new creatures in Christ, our spirits are re-created but our sin-cursed body remains. It is to be offered up to God as "living sacrifice," wholly committed to whatever use God may have for it. Only a "new creation" is capable of such a sacrifice.

Love for God:

Rom 8:6-7: 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, nor indeed can be. (NKJV)

The unsaved cannot have a truly spiritual mind. The unsaved mind is at war with God.

Only a genuinely saved person can have like-mindedness and love for God.

Lk 10:27: So he answered and said, "“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,” and “your neighbor as yourself.””
(NKJV)

Again, this is only possible for the saved. The unsaved cannot possibly love God with all their heart, mind, and soul for that is incompatible with being unsaved. Only God grants the power for this love, and He only grants it to His children.

Continual Repentance:

2 Co 7:10: For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death. (NKJV)

Only the truly saved are capable of genuine repentance, which is different from being contrite or sorry about sin (and its consequences). The genuinely saved REPENT and turn from sin because as new creations we are no longer SLAVES to sin.

1 Jn 1:8-10: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. (NKJV)

The genuinely saved do not lie about being sinful. We KNOW we are not sinless because the Truth in us illuminates our sin clearly. We see it, repent of it, and receive forgiveness - all of which is impossible for the unsaved.

The unsaved typically have a high opinion of their goodness and have a hard time seeing their sin, whereas the genuinely saved are grieved because their sin is all too apparent.

A Transformed Life:

Rom 12:2: And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (NKJV)

The truly saved life will experience genuine transformation because God is constantly renewing the mind. God does not indwell the

unsaved so they have no way to genuinely transform their life.

Humility:

Jas 4:6: But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." (NKJV)

The unsaved are by necessity full of pride. They cannot help it or change it. Therefore they can never have deep, sustaining humility. Genuine humility is a sign of true salvation.

Spiritual Fruit:

Lk 8:15: But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience. (NKJV)

The unregenerate person is incapable of producing good fruit. Presence of measurable and obvious Christian fruit in a life is real evidence of genuine saving faith.

Ga 5:22: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (NKJV)

The consistent presence of the fruit of the Spirit is an obvious evidence of genuine salvation

because it is impossible for the slave to sin to display any of these characteristics in more than a token form.

Devotion to God's Glory:

1 Co 10:31: Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. (NKJV)

The genuinely saved see ALL their life as an opportunity to glorify God; the unsaved are incapable of faking this attitude but for a short time, if at all.

Selflessness Towards Others:

1 Jn 4:7: Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. (NKJV)

Only the genuinely saved can consistently love others and put themselves second. The unsaved cannot help but put their own interests first over the long run. It's difficult effort for the saved, and impossible for the unsaved.

Ro 12:10: Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; (NKJV)

Again, honor and preference are possible only when empowered by God to do so. If these attributes are present in your life, then they are solid evidence of genuine saving faith.

Effective Prayer:

Jas 5:16: Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. (NKJV)

If you can see the effects of prayer, and prayers being answered in your life, then this is evidence of genuine saving faith. Prayer is effective for the “righteous” man and righteousness only comes after the supernatural rebirth of the spirit.

Obedient Living:

Mt 7:21: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. (NKJV)

It's not the people who SAY the right thing who are truly saved, but the people who DO the right thing; obedience as evidence of salvation is a common thread through all of Scripture.

Assurance Tests in 1 John

1 John 2:3 Now by this we **know** that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

Obedience is proof.

1 John 2:4 He who says, "I know Him," and **does not keep His commandments**, is a liar, and **the truth is not in him**.

Obedience is proof.

1 John 2:5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this **we know** that we are in Him.

Obedience is evidence.

1 John 2:11 But he who hates his brother **is in darkness** and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

You cannot hate a brother and be in the light; love for brethren is evidence.

1 John 3:14 We **know** that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.

Love for the brethren is proof.

*1 John 3:15 Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that **no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.***

If you hate a brother, that is evidence of being lost.

*1 John 3:16 By this **we know** love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.*

If we are willing to lay down our lives for our brethren, that is evidence of genuine saving faith.

*1 Jn 3:18-19: My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by **this we know that we are of the truth**, and shall assure our hearts before Him. (NKJV)*

When we put love into real action and not just talk about it - that is evidence of genuine salvation.

*1 John 3:24 Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this **we know** that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.*

Obedience is evidence of saving faith.

*1 John 4:2 By this **you know** the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God,*

Confession is evidence of genuine salvation.

*1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and **everyone who loves is born of God** and knows God.*

Knowing God and loving God is evidence of genuine faith.

*1 John 4:13 By this **we know that** we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.*

If the work of the Holy Spirit is evident in our life, this is proof of our salvation.

There are many more verses in 1 John that are "tests" for us to administer to ourselves to see if our faith is genuine.

Conduct of Genuine Saving Faith

You could list many more actions (and many more verses for each of these)... but the point is that when we have genuine saving faith, it affects our lives, not just how we live, but what we do with the TRUTH that brought us to salvation.

Tell people (don't be ashamed) - Rom 1:16: For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. (NKJV)

Live the truth - Php 1:27: Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, (NKJV)

Fellowship together the truth - Phil 1:5: for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, (NKJV)

Protect the truth - Ga 1:6-8: I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. (NKJV)

Suffer for truth - 1 Pe 4:12-13: Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing

happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. (NKJV)

Defend the truth - *Jude 3: Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. (NKJV)*

Questions to consider:

1. How do you tend to approach "faith"... through facts, intellect, and logic? Or through emotions, heart, and feeling? Do you ever find yourself thinking the "other" approach is not as legitimate?
2. Do you believe that these tests and evidences can REALLY, genuinely give us a true feeling of assurance? Or do we just have to "hope" we are saved and never really, seriously know for sure?
3. How does this assurance, or lack of it, affect our Christian walk on an everyday basis?

How You Can Be Saved – The Gospel of Jesus Christ

Every person needs to have a right relationship with the God who created us. (Do not believe the lie that you came from a monkey or goo. God made you, loves you, and is now trying to get your attention.)

Perhaps in your own heart you have tried to explain away spiritual things, convincing yourself it is all superstition or fairy tales, but the questions just will not go away. Do you know why they will not go away? Because God created in every person the need and desire to know the answers... this need is evidence that God exists, and is reaching out to you.

You need to be “saved.” Perhaps you do not understand that religious phrase. Let's take a look. To be saved means to be rescued from some impending harm. You cannot really desire to be saved unless you are convinced there is something that you need to be saved from. What do we need to be saved from?

The nutshell is this: you are a sinner. The God who created you does not tolerate sin. Like a

righteous human judge doing his duty, pronouncing punishment and penalty on wrongdoing, the Judge of the Universe – God – must pronounce eternal judgment on all those who have violated His perfect Law. That is the bad news. The good news is that God also has provided a way for us to be forgiven for those violations (sin).

But I'm a good person, you might say.

Are you really? Is it fair to call you a "sinner"? Most people would answer: "no, I'm a good person." Hmm... let's put that to the test.

Have you ever lied? Ever, even once? How many lies does it take to be a liar? One. You are a liar. So am I.

Have you ever stolen, cheated on your taxes, been lazy at work? You are a thief.

Ever lusted? Ever take God's name in vain ("g*d*m**t) or used His name casually ("oh my god")? Ever hated someone? Even once? That makes you an adulterer (Jesus said lust is equal to adultery in your heart), a blasphemer (using God's holy name without proper reverence), and murderer (Jesus said to hate your brother is the same as wanting to kill him).

See what I mean. You are not "good." You are a lying, stealing, blaspheming, murdering, adulterer (and that is just a start. We are not even halfway through the 10 Commandments). You are a sinner. I am a sinner. We ALL are sinners. We all have a very real need for forgiveness by God. That's what "being saved" means. We need to be saved from God's righteous pronouncement of "GUILTY!" and His just sentence of "DEATH" for our sin. Just like a good human judge will pronounce "guilty!" and a penalty on someone who has broken the law, God (The Perfect Judge) will do the same. Makes sense, right?

God mercifully provided a way for us to be saved. You cannot earn it, you cannot be good enough to merit it. You cannot demand it or obligate God to give it. It is a free gift manifested in God's love and sovereignty. Our salvation is unattainable except that God chose in eternity past to provide it.

Here are seven truths to help you find true Christian faith for yourself, based upon what God says in His Word – the Bible:

God Loves You: ...God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever

believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

You Are in Trouble: All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” — “You [God] are not a God who takes pleasure in evil; with You the wicked cannot dwell.

Sin Brings Disaster: The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God Has Provided the Answer – a Savior: God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Repent* of Your Sin and Turn To the Savior, Jesus Christ: Turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus — To all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.

*To repent means to “turn away from.” It means to be sorry for your sin and truly not want to do it anymore.

Believing in Jesus and Receiving the Savior by Faith: This is what the Bible says – God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son, Jesus. He who has the Son has eternal life; he

who does not have the Son of God does not have eternal life — If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

**Now Is the Time to Receive Him
and Respond in Obedience:**

Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts. — Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

Obedience is the evidence of true repentance, faith, and belief. We must respond to God's gift of salvation ON HIS TERMS by obeying what He commands.

Confess that you are a sinner publicly. Believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the ONLY way to salvation. Be baptized – which symbolizes your old life of sin and defiance being put to death in a grave of water, and a new Godly person being born to a new life of righteousness and good.

Find a group of Believers with whom you can serve, pray, and worship the God of the Universe. Read your Bible. Love others. Obey

God. Obedience is the EVIDENCE of GENUINE salvation.

Other considerations:

Do you know what "praying" is? It just means to talk to God. If you have finally realized you are a sinner and need to be saved, talk to God and ask Him to forgive you. Tell Him you believe Jesus died to pay for your sins, and you want to stop sinning. Thank God for this.

Now go and find some other Christians who are serious about their faith in God and who believe the Bible. Ask them to show you what God would have you do next. The Bible says we authenticate our salvation by our obedience – doing what God says. Other mature Christians can show you what God would have you do now, such as being baptized and meeting with other Christians regularly.

Your decision of what relationship you want with God is the most important decision you will ever make in your life. If you have questions, or need help finding Christians in your area who can talk to you further, do not hesitate to email me: brent@brenttriggs.com.

Look up these Bible verses where God says many of the things I've written above: John 3:16, Romans 3:23, Psalm 5:4, Romans 6:23, Romans 5:8, Acts 20:21, John 1:12, I John 5:11-12, Hebrews 3:7-8, Romans 10:9; Acts 2.38. I have adopted my salvation explanation from things I've read over time. Any similarity is not meant as plagiarism but rather just a choice to communicate this important truth in the best way possible. I have lost track of what part of this came from where, or what is my own.

I Believe

I believe the Bible to be the inspired, inerrant word of God and is the only infallible rule of faith and practice. (II Tim 3:16-17)

I believe that there is one true God (Dt 6:4), eternally existing in three persons...The Father (Jn 4:24), Son (Jn 1:1,14), and Holy Spirit. (Acts 5:3,4)

I believe that Jesus Christ was born of a virgin (Isa 7:14), that He is God incarnate, (Jn 1:1,14), and that He came to earth for the express purpose of paying the penalty for our sins (Jn 1:29), making for Himself His very own people. (Titus 2:14)

I believe that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and raised from the grave (I Cor 15:3,4); was exalted to God's right hand (Eph 1:20); and there is no other name under heaven by which man can be saved (Acts 4.12)

I believe that all men without Christ are sinners, guilty before God, and are under His condemnation. (Rom 3:23; 6:23)

I believe that all who repent and believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and who respond in genuine obedient faith, are supernaturally born again (John 3:3,7; 1 Pet. 1:3,23; Titus 3.5), sealed by God and given the Holy Spirit as a guarantee (2Cor 1:22), adopted as children of God (Jn 1:12), and eternally saved. (Jn 6:47)

I believe that all who come to believe in Christ, being filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:47-48), are commanded to be baptized (Matt 28.19; Acts 2.38; Mark 16.16, Gal 3.27); to observe the Lord's Supper until His return (Luke 22.19; 1 Corinthians 11:25-26); and are to be a part of a local assembly of Believers (ie, a home or community meeting on the Lord's Day of fellow Christians for worship, service and fellowship). (Heb 10.25; The Book of Ephesians)

I believe in the personal and imminent return of Jesus Christ for His church. (1 Thes 4:16,17)

I believe in the bodily resurrection of the just and unjust, the everlasting bliss of the saved in heaven, (Phil 3:20) and the everlasting punishment of the lost in hell. (Rev 20:15)

I believe that every believer is endowed with spiritual gifts for the building up of the body of Christ. (I Cor 12:4,11)

I believe that the sick may request to be annointed with oil by the Elders of the Church as they pray the "prayer of faith" and the Lord can save the sick and raise them up from both physical and/or spiritual sickness as God chooses according to His will and pleasure which He may or may not reveal to us. (James 5.14-15)

I believe that all believers are called to live a life of holiness apart from all worldliness and sinful practice. (Rom 12:1,2)