

Question: "What are some of the signs of genuine saving faith?"

Answer: This is one of the most important questions in the Christian life. Many believers doubt their salvation because they don't see signs of genuine faith in their lives. There are those who say we should never doubt our decision to follow Christ, but the Bible encourages us to examine ourselves to see if we are truly "in the faith" (2 Corinthians 13:5). Thankfully, God has given us ample instruction for how we can know for sure that we have eternal life. The first epistle of John was actually written for that purpose, as it states in 1 John 5:13, "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."

There is a series of tests in 1 John that we can use to examine ourselves and our faith. As we look at them, remember that no one will perfectly fulfill all of them all the time, but they should reveal a consistent trend that characterizes our lives as we grow in grace.

1. Do you enjoy having fellowship with Christ and His redeemed people? (1 John 1:3)
2. Would people say you walk in the light, or walk in the darkness? (1 John 1:6-7)
3. Do you admit and confess your sin? (1 John 1:8)
4. Are you obedient to God's Word? (1 John 2:3-5)
5. Does your life indicate you love God rather than the world? (1 John 2:15)
6. Is your life characterized by "doing what is right"? (1 John 2:29)
7. Do you seek to maintain a pure life? (1 John 3:3)
8. Do you see a decreasing pattern of sin in your life? (1 John 3:5-6) [Note: this refers to not continuing in sin as a way of life, not a total absence of sin.]
9. Do you demonstrate love for other Christians? (1 John 3:14)
10. Do you "walk the walk," versus just "talking the talk"? (1 John 3:18-19)
11. Do you maintain a clear conscience? (1 John 3:21)
12. Do you experience victory in your Christian walk? (1 John 5:4)

If you are able to truthfully answer "Yes" to these questions (or a majority of them, and are working on the others), then your life is bearing the fruit of true salvation. Jesus said that it is by our fruits that we are known as His disciples (Matthew 7:20). Fruitless branches—professing believers who do not display the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) are cut off and thrown into the fire (John 15:7). A genuine faith is one that not only believes in God (the devils themselves do that - James 2:19), but leads to open confession of sin and obedience to Christ's commands. Remember, we are saved by grace through faith, not by our works (Ephesians 2:8-9), but our works should display

the reality of our salvation (James 2:17-18). Genuine saving faith will always produce works; a faith that is perpetually without works is no faith at all and saves no one.

In addition to these confirmations, we need to remember God's promises and the reality of the war we are in. Satan is just as real as Jesus Christ, and he is a formidable enemy of our souls. When we turn to Christ, Satan will look for every opportunity to deceive and defeat us. He will try to convince us that we are unworthy failures or that God has given up on us. When we are in Christ, we have the assurance that we are kept by Him. Jesus Himself prayed for us in John 17:11 that the Father would "protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one." Again in verse 15, He prayed, "keep them from the evil one."

In John 10:27-29, Jesus said, "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand." If you hear and obey the voice of Jesus, then you are one of His sheep, and He will never let you go. Jesus gave a wonderful word picture here of Christians securely held within His loving hands and the Father's almighty hands wrapping themselves around His, giving us a double assurance of eternal security.

Recommended Resources: *That You May Know: Assurance of Salvation in 1 John* by Christopher David Bass and *Logos Bible Software*.