

I DOUBT MY SALVATION

“These things have I written unto you...that YE MAY KNOW that ye have eternal life.”(1John 5: 13)

HOW CAN A PERSON KNOW THAT THEY ARE SAVED? ARE THERE ANY RECOGNISABLE SIGNS THAT TRUE CONVERSION HAS OCCURRED?

Furthermore how can Christians discern the “spiritual standing” of a person calling themselves a Christian. After all, Paul tells us to judge those within in 1 Corinthians 5:12.

The Bible outlines a number of definite signs which in earlier times were called 'marks of grace'.

In this paper we'll look at seven sure signs that a person is truly converted.

1. Conviction of sin
2. Understanding of Scripture
3. The Desire for Fellowship
4. The Discovery of Prayer
5. A New Heart
6. An Initial Measure of Assurance
7. Attacks of Satan

*“True converts really want to worship the Lord and show their love for Him. They do not need to be chased or persuaded.”-
Peter Masters*

In Acts 2:37-38 and 41-46, there are accounts concerning the change in the attitudes and lives of several thousand people at Pentecost.

“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, REPENT, and be BAPTIZED every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins ... Then they that gladly received his word were baptized ... And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' DOCTRINE and FELLOWSHIP, and in BREAKING OF BREAD, and in PRAYERS ... with GLADNESS and SINGLENESS OF HEART.” (Acts 2:37-38, 41- 46)

Six of the chief signs or marks of grace are found in this passage. We can be assured that they can be discerned.

1. CONVICTION OF SIN

When true salvation has occurred, the broken and contrite heart looks to God for mercy and grace.

A broken and contrite heart has come to God and admitted that there is nothing good whatever in them. They have said to God that all they deserve is eternal hell fire and torment. They have admitted that they cannot save themselves nor can any church,

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religion, set of rules, baptism or trust in anything or anyone else. They have thrown themselves on the mercy of God and have believed that the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross for their sin. They have received Jesus as their Saviour and have trusted in him alone to have paid their penalty for sin. Like a drowning man they have called out to be saved.

If there has been a cool and 'intellectual' acknowledgement of their sin (or a momentary remorse over sin), it could be doubtful that salvation has occurred. Testimonies that make no mention of repentance and a turning away from sin are suspect in the extreme. Testimonies that make no mention of sin and the inevitable result of burning in the literal fires of hell are suspect.

Testimonies of "pop star" conversions using glib and joking language and making conversion sound painless are suspect.

Testimonies of people saying that they couldn't cope with life and wanted Jesus to take over are suspect.

Testimonies of people saying that Jesus stands by them and their lives are far more successful now (in their unchanged worldly lives) are suspect in the extreme. Repentance is a turning away from sin and a turning to God. At the onset of conviction of sin, we are not only ashamed of sin but we also lose our taste for sin. We long to leave it and be different.

In addition, we change our mind about the Lord, seeking Him only as our Saviour and yielding to Him as the master and ruler of our lives.

IN SUMMARY: Where there is no shame there is no conversion; no break with the old life - no conversion; no separation from the world - no conversion; no Lordship of Jesus Christ - no conversion.

The questions you need to ask yourself are as follows:

1. Have you ever felt wretched and deeply ashamed at your sinfulness before a holy God?
2. Have you ever only trusted Jesus Christ only as your Saviour and fixed your hope only on His atoning death and shed blood?
3. Have you ever yielded yourself to Jesus Christ as both Saviour and Lord?

2. UNDERSTANDING OF SCRIPTURE

As seen in Acts 2:42, new converts continued steadfastly in the doctrine of the apostles.

It is a sign of true conversion if someone's mind has been opened up by grace to understand and love the word of God. A true convert grasps the significance of the Bible (and there is only one - the King James) and becomes fixed and even riveted on it and firmly loyal to it. On the other hand, people who make no headway at all with the Bible are most unlikely to be true converts regardless of any profession that they may make. **QUESTION:** Has the Bible acquired a new and gripping authority in your life?

3. THE DESIRE FOR FELLOWSHIP and the family bond with other believers.

A true convert desires and seeks after other Christians for spiritual companionship. If the supposed convert still has the desire to be with the world and his former associates, this is a bad sign. It is unlikely that true conversion has taken place. True converts feel a gap developing between themselves and unbelieving friends. This may often be painful but it is an inescapable work of grace in the heart.

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4. THE DISCOVERY OF PRAYER

Another sign of true conversion is the practice of prayer. Have you discovered prayer? Have your prayers left behind the petty and selfish sentiments of the unconverted people? Have you learned to pray for the spiritual blessings of understanding, power over sin and the blessings of witnessing to others? Do your prayers reflect the evidence of being more concerned about unsaved relatives and friends than about yourself?

5. A NEW HEART

In Acts 2 this is called “singleness of heart”. A great change has taken place in the innermost thoughts and feelings of the true convert, leading to a great openness to the things of God and serving Him. They do not have the dual motives of wanting divine blessings with worldly fame, fortune and pleasures at the same time.

If the supposed convert remains addicted to worldly possessions, ambitions, fashions and rock music and are unmoved when serious advice is given from the word of God, then we must gravely doubt that true conversion has taken place.

Unfortunately with the passing of time believers may lose their first love and go through seasons of coldness and disobedience. This is a serious and Spirit quenching sin. But the beginning of the Christian’s life is marked by a warm, responsive and obedient heart to the things of God.

6. AN INITIAL MEASURE OF ASSURANCE

The peace of God and the initial sense of belonging (assurance) are placed in the heart by the Holy Spirit.

They have tasted a peace they have never tasted before and such that the world can’t give. This includes a very real sense of forgiveness from their sins.

The Westminster Confession of Faith states: “Assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that the true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties, before he be a partaker of it.”

7. ATTACKS OF SATAN

In Ephesians 6:16 the attacks of Satan are mentioned to the true convert and these are necessary signs of true conversion. Satan will fire his darts of doubt and fear into the true convert’s mind. An unsaved soul is not usually troubled by these doubts and fears.

The true convert now has a great battle that has begun, for they *“wrestle ... against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world...”* (Ephesians 6:12)

Unconverted people rarely go around in deep distress about their spiritual standing, “Holy anxiety”, as the Puritans used to call it, is good evidence that a person’s treasure is now in heaven.