

HOW MAY I KNOW THAT I AM A CHRISTIAN

I John 5:13

INTRODUCTION:

I would give everything that I own to be assured of the certainty of my salvation, said a graduate from an ivy league university. James South, who had been studying in a major scientific center had now come to talk with a preacher. Help me to see for myself, he plead, that I am not deluded for believing in Christ! James had turned from religion to science as a way of life. Now as an engineer and teacher he was baffled by sleepless nights - almost he feared insanity. The guilt and denying of this fundamental truth bothered him.

Have you ever known someone like this who doubted your religious experience. Sometimes life brings confusion, frustrations, and feelings. Sometimes the unexpected happens. As the testimony of a woman who was struck in her 60th year said, this helps to make religion real. You needn't argue with me about God, she said, I see him. Trouble may seem an unlikely place to find God, nevertheless there are many people who have found security.

How may I know I am a Christian. The emphasis is on the word "know".

God's word is so marvelously complete - that it never leaves us in doubt or in despair. If you are troubled today, you may only have to turn over the pages of His Word, and with your eyes open and your heart responsive - you'll find the help you need. This question, whether or not you are a Christian, you may only have to turn the pages of the Bible. And to find the word spoken here by Jesus and given by the Apostles.

A man was holding a series of meetings in a Western city, and one of the personal workers passed through the audience and came to a man who was a quite

well-known Christian. And he said to him, not knowing who he was - "Are you a Christian?" The man said, "I hope so". The Christian worker said, "can you not say more than that?" What would you have me say, said he. The worker said, "I would have you say that you know you are a Christian". He hesitated a moment - "I think it would be presumptuous on my part to say that I know I am a Christian." I question if I may know with certainty until I see God face to face.

It is (not) presumptuous for you to say that you know that you are a Christian. It is a lack of faith to say anything less.

How may you know - our text, I John 5:13 - these things have I written unto you that ye may know. What things? All that precedes this statement in this Epistle. We study this carefully and you may be sure that you have passed from bondage to freedom, darkness to light, and death to life. The Gospel of John was written in order that we might know that Jesus is Christ - the son of God.

What things were written. We get back and read about the parables, the miracles, and you read about Nicodemus and his heart being changed. And men saying - come see the man that told me all things that ever I did. And you would understand. When you look into the eyes of a man who was blind from his birth and see his groping his way through darkness until he comes close enough to Jesus to hear his word and see him restored. And they begin to ask Jesus whether or not this man was a sinner or whether it was responsible for somebody else. When you look at the scene of Lazarus who was dead four days in the tomb and through the tears of his sister pleading with him, Jesus simply said, Lazarus come forth. Now all of this was written, the Gospel of John to prove the deity of Jesus and the Epistle John is written that we might know that we have passed from death into life. These things have I written unto you that you may know that you have eternal life and that you may believe on the name of the son of God. So this Epistle, with

five chapters, 105 verses - the whole subject is assurance and it is stated very clearly.

Doubt is always disturbing. Anyone who is in doubt and encourages that doubt will always be unsettled. Sometimes doubt is due to inheritance. Your father may be a skeptic. He may be a doubter - your grandfather or grandparents may have turned their back on Jesus. And you may have (inherited) this doubt. There is a way to overcome this - sometimes doubt is due to ignorance. (If) we shut our eyes to the Epistles of St. John, I do not wonder that someone would doubt about his salvation. If you have turned away from this - no wonder you question Jesus. We simply will not be convinced. But any thoughtful person who will put aside his prejudice and accept the Scriptures - read these with your eyes and your heart open will come to a clear concept of God as well as an appreciation to what it means, to be a Christian.

A man some years ago on the Pacific Coast wrote a letter and he said for 50 years I have been an infidel. He read a sentence that was reporting a Christian meeting which appeared in the newspaper, that set him thinking. And he said that he made up his mind that he would spend 10 minutes each day honestly studying the New Testament. He wrote, I only got through the third day. When I had accepted Jesus Christ as my Saviour. I believe that every thoughtful man who will consider carefully the claims of Jesus as recorded in the New Testament may come to know him before a week has passed.

Doubt is always (disturbing) And there is no doubt that disturbs us more than that of assurance. And it may be because we have not fully accepted God's word. You may have little peace or no peace at all. When temptations come and trials beset you - the burdens are heavy. You do not lean upon, "let not your hearts be troubled". Or I will never leave thee or forsake thee. If you do not doubt God's

Word you may meet with all the storms of life and yet have peace. But if you do doubt God's Word, you have no power - no secret within you.

John Calvin once said there is no more destructive concept than the uncertainty of salvation. And John Calvin was writing about people who believed about the notion of pergatory and penitence and stages of salvation.

Now it is (no doubt) that real Christians suffer perplexities. The Apostle Paul said, I don't do the good I want to do - instead, I do the evil that I do not want to do. Doubt is possible to come to us - as (President Lowell of Harvard) once said about Columbus, he started sailing West. He did not know where he's going. And when he arrived, he did not know where he was. And when he returned, he did not know where he had been. Nevertheless he inspired men and changed human history.

There was a woman once who had two children. And she had been active in church and had been converted at the age of 11. It is not that I doubt my experience she said, for Christ was real when I was baptized. But it developed that she was struggling against the sense of shame and guilt. And she found in her own life much sin and she was unacceptable to God. When this had been admitted, and she knew that she had been forgiven, then she found reassurance.

Young people often in immature fashion as religious seekers have their doubts. They do not like the dogmatic religion of their parents - so they will deliberately bait a person of another faith - or they will attend another denomination. Or they will become a critic of the church.

A young man who had graduated from college, because every other boy seated on the pew with me, got up and went to the front when an invitation was given during a revival meeting. He soon discovered that he was uncommitted to Jesus. Cut off from other Christians, even though he had been baptized. It was not until he was

22 and active in the church that he settled his relationship with God.

Quite often an over (zealous evangelist) will confront a group of Christians with the possibility that they have (never been saved.) He describes his own dramatic conversion and implies that anyone who has not had a similar experience is lost. And this disturbs a sensitive Christian. What then should one believe about salvation.

A (young man) who was a prisoner of war, had aged greatly and his hair had turned white in four months, described the horrible punishment he was encountering. He was confined to a box for days. Someone asked, how did you keep your sanity when you were locked in that cage. Over and over again I repeated the precious promise - 2 Tim. 1:12. I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. Now (Paul) did not say, I know what I believe - (but) he said, I know (whom) I have believed. And this is the promise of the Scripture. There is a little bit of logic in here today - gone tomorrow - redemption.

The (security) is found in the person - just as a (child) who had been placed in a orphanage. This child said my father placed me here and he said that he'd promise to come back and visit me. Days went by - 7 years went by. And the father never did return. No wonder when that child reached youth, they had great difficulty getting him to trust anyone. Or the reliability of anything of that anybody might say.

Now that question - (why) is it that many people in the church lack this radiance which is the inevitable consequence of Christ living within. They are hypocrites. They are good men and women. But here is the fact that many people outside the church even think that they must become miserable in order to ^{HAVE} this

security. We may as well face it, many of us are not good examples of the faith we profess.

If Christians or people who live Christ's lives - how does it happen that many of us give so little evidence that he is living inside of us. How can we miss it. Can a man be a Christian and be a stranger to that inner life.

You would be slow to accept what a man has to offer if he was supposed to be a Christian and does not earnestly pursue it. And of course God knows the depth of a man's sincerity. Who has sold out all the way to God.

In New York State ^{A MAN} who was disappointed in politics in his early life, left the city and went to the mountains - The Adirondacks - where he lived as a hermit. He was imbittered about the world. He would allow no one to enter his house if he could prevent it. And one night there was a terrific storm ripping through the mountains. Three men came to his hut and wrapped on the door - and sought admission. The old hermit saw them standing - he did not have the heart to turn them away, so they came inside. He prepared a meal for them and they were talking before the fire about the events of the past. One of the men saw an old violin on the shelf above the fireplace and he said to the hermit - may I play that. The man rose, taking the violin in his hand, I don't think I could allow you to play it. It is my companion - it took me a long time to learn to play it and I don't want a stranger handling it. They talked awhile longer - the evening was long and the hours were dragging slowly by. The hermit finally consented and allowed the stranger to play. He took the violin without even tuning it - put the violin under his chin, took the bow and moved it across the strings. And the instrument was soon singing like a nightingale. Crying like a child and sobbing like a man in distress. The violinist who was a master, played on and on. He played "America" - he played "Nearer My God To Thee". The old man dropped his face and put his hands over his face and sobbed, as if his heart would

break. When the violinist finished - the hermit took the instrument and placed it on the shelf before the fireplace and said, I never knew before what music was. I never knew what was in this instrument. I shall never touch it again.

All this harmony was not in the violin - it was in the master. But the man who put that violin to his chin and drew the bow across the strings was the famous player - the greatest violinist of his day. Now that story suggests the secret of power. No matter how poor, uncultured, we may have the power of the knowledge of God's word - and doubting God's Word cuts off the power.

If you doubt the word of God in the matter of assurance there is no such thing as constant victory. Of course, you are not seeking an easy journey through life. If you are - God pity you. Great souls graduate from the school of conflict. The greatest musicians have been men who have had broken hearts. The greatest leaders of men are those who have come out of great struggle. You are sure to have trials. Men are born unto trouble.

Our lack of assurance is revealed in so many ways. Sometimes even in our praying. How many times have you prayed and "save us at last". Now this is not really scriptural - for God's promise is a present promise. John 5:24. Verily, verily, I say unto you - he that hearth my word and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life.

Salvation is not a matter of (slow progress). It is not stopping one's sin today and another tomorrow. It is not just cleaning up on the outside. A man swears because there is something wrong within. A man steals because his heart and life are not right. A man hurts his wife because he is a brute, and because of his inward condition.

A woman one day was sitting in Central Park, New York, while her little girl was playing on the grass. Suddenly a great St. Bernard dog came bounding through the park - barking furiously. The little girl was naturally frightened and came sobbing into her mother's arms. The mother spoke kindly to her and tried to comfort her - but could not. Finally when everything else failed, my dear, stop your crying. The dog has stopped his barking. The little girl looked around, still with her sobs uncontrolled, and said - yes Mother, but the bark is still in him. And that is the trouble with the average man. Becoming a Christian is not cutting off one sin today and another tomorrow. Becoming a Christian is stepping instantly out of darkness into light. As Sam Hadley staggered drunk and in rags to the mourners bench, knealt and asked God's forgiveness. He rose up a Christian. So let us not say again and save us at last.

As some of us lack assurance - it is revealed in the way we think. The average Christian thinks that someday he is going to stand before a great white throne, and the books are going to be opened on him, and he will be told to stand on the right hand or on the left. Now Jesus said, he that hearth my words and believeth on him, that sent me, hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation. That condemnation is judgement. John 5:24, Rom. 8:1. There is now therefore no judgement for them that are in Christ Jesus. You have faith in Christ and your Saviour is going to appear in your behalf before God - he bore the penalty of your sin.

Do you know that you are a Christian. Now, you may know.

First, by your confidence in him and in his word. I John 4:15. You have only to determine whether you have confessed him as the Son of God. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ - is born of God. In V. 1. You have only to decide whether or not you believe that. Now I know that I am a Christian and I speak for you now as well as for myself. Because I have confidence in his Word.

He told me and I believe him.

There is a story that has come from a man who lived on the estate of an English nobleman. A man of high esteem and a great friend of the late queen of England. He would slip away to a little house where dwelt a saintly woman by the name of Betty. This little old woman had known this nobleman from his youth. She knew his illness and she baked for him a peculiar little cake which the nobleman would eat at her house. And which he said, prolonged his life. One day the queen came to visit this nobleman and while she was staying at his house - he went down to this old-fashioned woman and said, Betty, her majesty the queen is at the palace today and I would like for you to come up and see her this evening. You may believe it was a day of excitement for Betty. She went through all of her boxes, put on her best garment, and then she took a little old-fashioned shaw which she pinned down over her head, and made her way to the great palace. When she appeared at the door, the servant looked at her and said, what is it. Betty said, I want to come in. But you can't come in said the man. The house is full of guests and the queen is here. The master cannot see you now. Betty stood there a moment, and then she said, but he told me to come. The servant was not easily persuaded but finally he told the master of the house and was told to admit the old woman. They brought her into the drawing room and the nobleman led her over to the queen - and said, this is Betty. She has helped keep me alive and I would like for you to see her. Old Betty dropped to her knees and was almost ready to kiss the hem of the queen's dress. Then she withdrew and when she came to the man at the door, she looked up into his face and said, "I told you that he told me to come". My Blessed Saviour told me. If I was weak, he would give me strength. If I had doubts, he would banish them. If I would confess my sins, he would pardon them. He told me to come - so I came. Just as I am without one plea. But that thy blood was shed for me. And

that thou bidst me come to thee. Oh Lamb of God, I come.

The marvelous book , "Twice born men", was written by an English novelist. It is really a story of the work of the Salvation Army in the slums of the great city of London. One of the chapters is entitled, "The lowest of the low". And that is the name given to the man who's story is told in the chapter. Let me describe just a little of it. His mother was a drunkard. His father was dead. When he was a baby, his mother used to take him to the public house and to keep him quiet, she would put her finger in the glass of gin and rub it across his lips. So that before he could walk, he had the taste of strong drink. When he was but a little boy, he was staggering drunk upon the street. Besides being a drunkard, he was a thief. He was all that was bad. He was one of those shivering dirty creatures that crept along the streets of the great city. His naked feet - clothing in rags, and with the rain wetting his hair, a little pale blue lipped shivering child. More like a homeless child than a motherless boy. In his young man hood - he became a (soldier) in the British army. There he broke the laws of the army and was sentenced to prison. He came out of prison - he was discharged from the army in disgrace. And he drifted into the very lowest depth of sin and finally he could bear the burden no longer. So he came to the (Salvation Army) and listened to the hymns. He heard the testimonies - he listened to the officer who stood upon the platform - asking for lost men to return to Jesus. One night in the midst of the crowd, a fallen man like himself - stood up and staggered and dropped down upon his knees at the altar - buried his face in his hands, and said, "God be merciful to me a sinner." And quick as a flash, he was changed.

At once he began to seek for his old mother. (She) had gone deeper in sin than ever. Now we have heard of the father seeking for the prodigal son. Here was the son seeking for the prodigal mother. At last he found her. When he

entered the room where she lived, he found it little better than a huddle. He walked across the room, putting his arms around her, he kissed her and said, "Mother, I have come to take you back to the home that I have prepared for you." She would not believe him. Her mind had become affected by her sin. But she went. Pleased as a girl - in God's own good time her mind was restored. And of course, in God's own good time she was restored and she was there by her son's side - a changed woman. And eats at his table. He was never married. He said, that when the people say to him - what does it all mean. That he always makes this reply - God gave me another chance. What a salvation. What a saviour. I know that he can save a man!

11 - Second, we may know that we are Christians because of our obedience to him. That we know him if we keep his commandments. I John 2:3. What are his commandments.

First, (to follow him.) If you follow Jesus - you will know whether you are a Christian or not. A man once made his way over the Rocky Mountains in the company of a guide. They camped and during the night there was a heavy snow fall. When the man arose in the morning, he said to the guide as he stepped outside the door, somebody has passed in the night. He saw footprints in the snow. But the guide looked down and studied it carefully and said, not one person sir, but 50. They all stepped in the leader's footprints. That is being a Christian - just following Jesus, when you have accepted him.

If you are to obey him - you are to go out after the lost. I do not know any thing that will strengthen your faith as much as this will.

I remember a story that Mr. Alexander told who was with a party, in Philadelphia. It was midnight and the crowd thronged the building and he had been leading the singing. And the preacher had done his best in telling the story of Jesus and then they went through the audience to try to rescue the perishing.

And there in the crowd, he saw, Mrs. Alexander. Her arms around a fallen woman and heard her whispering in that woman's ear something tender and sacred. He saw the fallen woman arise to her feet in penitence and said that she would accept Christ. And he said Mrs. Alexander's face was radiant. This will strength your faith if you follow in his footsteps.

III — Third, We may know that we are Christians by doing his will. John 7:17.
(If) any man will do his will, he shall know. Therefore, do not stay in darkness.
Begin to do something. Do not sit in darkness. Do not mourn because you are so weak. Strengthen somebody else.

IV — Fourth, we may know that we are Christians by our habits. I John 3:9.
Whosoever is born of God, let them not commit sin. For his seed remaineth in him. Does that not condemn you. But the literal translation of it is this --
(no one who is a child of God is habitually guilty of sin.) We say we have no sin - then the truth is not in us.

Now there are (three) marks of a Christian as touching sin here.

First, there is the (desire to quick recovery) (If) you are a child of God and find yourself sinning - you will want to get back to God instantly.

Second, a willingness to confess to people who (you have injured) - you cannot be unjust to your children and atone by saying I will be kind tomorrow. You must make it right with your children. Many a home has been hurt because of this injury. And a husband's influence lost and a mother's power lost. Because they were not right with those about them. They did not confess their wrong. I do not know any thing that will make a home more like Heaven than just to say that you were wrong to your children. I didn't treat you fairly and you will forgive me, won't you?

Third, a readiness to confess your sins to God. Now I do not know how far to go in public confession to the world but I know that here, if I had a sin in my life - I am not quite sure that I ought to go to this man or the other man and tell him about it. But I do know this, that if I have a sin in my life - that I must go to God. And make it right with him. I may know that I am a Christian if I follow closely to the leading of God's Spirit.

Fourth, I know I am a Christian by my interest in others for him. / John 3:14. We know that we have passed from death unto life because we have loved the brethren. When you become a Christian - you are changed. Your old characteristics which came to you in your natural birth are likely to remain in your disposition.

For example, here is a man who is very selfish. When he becomes a Christian, he must fight that thing. Or here is one who is intellectual. It is very easy to understand of a man who is dull and slow - that he will be very critical in his understanding. Here is another person who is weak and he has very little sympathy for the man who possesses strength. Now Paul says, put on therefore as the elect of God mercy, kindness, humbleness, meekness, long-suffering. Col. 3:12. And move on to perfection.

In (Twice Born Men) the author tells of a Salvation Army worker who was known as the (angel adjutant). And from what we read - she was worthy of the name. She loved Jesus - she loved the lost. And one day she was working through the slums and she was coming along and found a man known as "old born drunk". This man used to go to the factory selling little sheets of paper - giving the betting news for the public houses around about. And the (angel) had always been accustomed to sinful men but she says, until she saw him she didn't realize the repulsive abomination vice can degrade. The man was the child of drunken parents. He was conceived and born while his parents were mad with drink. When he first opened his eyes - they taught him to drink. When, but a baby, he used to sleep off his drunken stupor.

When a boy, and able to walk - he used to stagger because he was intoxicated. He was a true miserable soul - he was short and thick set in stature. Ragged children used to mock at him. The dogs on the street would bark at him. One day the angel met him and said to him - you don't look very happy. She came closer. She said, you don't look happy. Still no response. She came closer and put her hand on his shoulder and said, I would like to help you. I love Jesus and Jesus loves you. And there was a trace of a tear in his eye.

She found out where he lived and went into his home and that was vile in the extreme. His wife was as great a drunkard as he. There was one bright spot in their lives - they had a son. And the boy was kept away from the home so that he too might not become a drunkard. They had fallen to the lowest depths of sin and shame. But they made their way at the request of the angel to the Salvation Army meeting one night and heard the testimonies and still drunk - they staggered to the altar and got down upon their knees. It seems that a man called "Joe" had just risen to give a testimony. An old born drunk, knew him. And while still on his knees the man called out "Oh Jesus", I would like to be like Joe. Then turning his face to his wife he said - do you think that I could ever be like Joe. And the angel came nearer said, Jesus can make you like Joe and the old man rose up and staggered and said, I will take him. And his wife was transformed. His temptations were terrific. One day he made his way to a public house where his business called him - and men tempted him to drink. An old born drunk refused to take the liquor-they mocked him. When he still refused, one man took a glass of beer and threw it in his face. If you won't take it inside - take it outside. And the old man who had been born drunk and to whom the smell of alcohol was terrific - just brushed it away, and looked up with a smile. And when he came down to the end of life, the angel came to him, and bending over he said. Is it all well with you. The old man looked up with a smile and said, I am without fear.

I know this, there is among us not a person who would ever doubt himself to be a Christian. If we would reach out to help the suffering. Such a spirit of service and love would drive away all doubt and you will know that you are a Christian.