Checklist for Knowing You're a Christian
2 Corinthians 13:5

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Opening Remarks

Are you a Christian? Are you really certain? If you were to examine yourself, what "burden of proof" would you present to prove you are indeed a Believer? Did you know this question is addressed in the Bible? It's found in **2 Corinthians 13:5** where Paul says this:

> **"Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test?"**

> And Paul was not alone in requesting this self-examination; Jeremiah commanded this in **Lamentations 3:40, when he wrote, "Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord."**

Before I administer this "checklist" that helps disclose your posture before God, I want to make some observations regarding it:

First, I should note that this message is not for vile, openly rebellious sinners. They know they are unsaved! Paul assigns this *test of faith* to people who gather for worship, tithe, and call themselves "Christians." You see, the worst thing that can happen is to live in self-deception and assume all is well between God and us. But the fact is, the writer of Hebrews shows that Christians can drift away from the Faith (2:1–4).

> Jesus said in Matthew 7:21—23, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father in heaven. (22) ***Many*** will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' (23) Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness!'" So, yes! Christians can drift away from their salvation in Christ.

However, there's a second benefit for "examining ourselves" to know whether we are "in the Faith." When we administer this self-exam and pass it, it brings incredible peace to our hearts and minds to know we remain steadfast in our relationship with God.

Now, for a third observation about this Test of Faith: **This checklist involves examining ourselves *in the present* and not referencing a Christian experience from years ago.** Salvation indeed has a beginning point, but the proof that we have a viable, living faith involves investigating our present relationship with Christ.

What's certain is this: if our salvation could be determined by a past, once-and-for-all event, Paul would have never commanded us to take the Test of Faith. His words would have been superfluous! But the Bible shows that salvation involves a living, in-the-now relationship with Christ. Here are the Lord's words in Matthew 3:8—10,

> "Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. (9) And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. (10) Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

With those observations stated, have you ever wondered what the *Test of Faith* looks like? For some time now, I have compiled a checklist from the Bible to test our faith. This is not an exhaustive list, but it does incorporate the appropriate questions that help determine whether one is "in the Faith."

(Transition) The first question is the most important and obvious:

1. Do you love the Lord God with all your heart?

One of the more familiar texts in the Bible is found in Mark 12:29, where it says, "Jesus answered, 'The most important [commandment] is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. (30) And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength."

I believe most *professing* Christians would acknowledge that they "love God." They are grateful for his substitutional death on the Cross for their sins. But, does a verbal confession of one's love for God fully affirm one's love for their Creator? The answer is, ***No, not completely;* there is something more that provides proof**. And Jesus addresses this in John 14:15 when he told his disciples this: **"If you love me, you will keep my commandments."**

In other words, our love for God is not determined by "lip service" but by our adherence to His Word. And this principle is embedded throughout the New Testament:

> John 14:21 says, "Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me."
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> John 14:23 says, "Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching."
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> 2 John 1:6 says, "And this is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands.
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> 1 John 5:3 says, "In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome."
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> 1 John 2:3 says, "By this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commands." (4) Whoever says, "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, (5) but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. **By this we may know that we are in him**: (6) whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he [Jesus] walked."

The preceding verses present a decisive truth: **there is an interconnection between truly loving God and obeying His Word. It is fundamental to know we are saved.** Are you doing this? Can you place a check mark by answering affirmatively: *Yes, I love God, and my obedience to his commandments testifies to this*.

(Transition) The second question on this checklist of the Test of Faith is this:

2. Do you possess a large love for fellow Christians?

In the preceding point, I quoted Mark 12:30 where Jesus said, "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your

strength." But then the next verse says this: **"The second [greatest commandment] is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."**

We have to admit something: If 'love thy neighbor' is the second greatest commandment of the Bible [and it is!], this presents a gigantic problem! It means we will need special enablement to truly love some people. For example, you and some people that you mix and mingle with are like "oil and water." There's something about that person that creates angst even when you're in the same room with them.

Thankfully, the Lord provides the remedy for loving such people. It's disclosed in Romans 5:5 where Paul says this: **[God's love has been] "poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit."** The word for "poured" means to "gush forth" or "distribute largely." This means, even when we must mingle with hypocritical, lowlife, vengeful people, we can draw upon a river of love that God courses from his throne in heaven and straight into our hearts. It isn't a trickle of love or a dribble of love; it's a gushing, profuse river of love that comes directly from the Holy Spirit. This means, "With God, all things are possible," and he will supernaturally help us love some people.

Consider what this means when we can place a check mark by living by the law of love. The Bible says in 1 John 4:7—8, "Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. **Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.** (8) Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love."

Wow! What confidence this brings to our souls when we live by the law of love.

(Transition) Next in our checklist for affirming your faith in Christ is this:

3. Do you have love for the Second Coming of Jesus Christ?

Maybe that statement surprises you, and you have never considered that a *love for the Lord's Return* is contingent on being "in the Faith." Does the Bible say this? Here is what 2 Timothy 4:8 says: "Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also **to all who have loved his appearing."**

How do we apply this passage to our lives? Well, think about it this way: Whenever you contemplate upon God and his Word, do you ever consider the Lord's Return? If so, what happens in your heart and mind? Do you long to be released from this world of trouble and pain and sin? Are you looking forward to meeting Christ in the clouds and spending eternity with him and the heroes of the Bible? If you "love his appearing," you are likely Born Again.

On the other hand, notice how wicked people appraise the Lord's Return. It's found in 2 Peter 3:3—4.

> Knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. (4) They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation."

Foolish and nefarious sinners have no love for the Lord's return to Earth. They mock Bible prophecies and behave as if the world will continue as it is forever. But soon (and very soon), the Lord will stun the world when he appears in the clouds to collect those who "love his appearing."

(Transition) Let's continue with this checklist that affirms salvation.

4. Is your soul—the deepest part of your being—grieved, vexed, and even angry about the sin and wickedness of the world? Or, do you shrug it off?

When you listen to the national news are you ever grieved and wondered how America has gone so wrong? What happens when you hear about race wars, child trafficking, and issues that oppose God's Word? Do these things upset you? I hope so!

Here is what 2 Peter 2:7–8 says about Abraham's nephew, Lot, when he lived at Sodom and Gomorrah: "Lot [was], greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked (8) (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was **tormenting his righteous soul** over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard)."

The deviance of the world agitates true Believers. And if this describes your disposition toward unrighteousness, it is the inner witness of the Holy Spirit testifying that your heart belongs to God. This is a normal reaction of the righteous!

(Transition) And this leads to my next point.

5. Which best characterizes you: the deeds of darkness or the fruit of the Spirit?

In Galatians 5:19— 23, Paul compares the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. Here is what he says:

> The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

These are practices that separate the righteous from the wicked. Here's what's interesting: After disclosing this analogy, Paul adds this in verse 24: **"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires"** [NIV].

Do you know what it means to "crucify the flesh"? It means you seize sinful practices—which Paul listed—and you spiritually nail them to the cross. You deem yourself dead to them. By doing this, you illustrate that they have no control over your behavior.

When we habitually commit sin, it strips away the assurance of salvation. That's why we have to make an effort to walk in the light of God.

> Notice what the Apostle John said in 1 John 1:6—7. "If we claim to have fellowship with him **and yet walk in the darkness**, we lie and do not live out the truth. (7) But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin."

> Paul said this in Ephesians 5:5, "For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. (8) For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (9) (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)" (Ephesians 5:5—11).
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> "The Lord knows those who are his," and "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity" (2 Timothy 2:19).

(Illustration) I'm not suggesting that Christians never sin. But there's a difference between the sins of sinners and the sins of Christians, and I'll illustrate this: Pigs love mud puddles! Sheep hate them. The difference is, when pigs find mud they relish their estate and wallow in it. But when sheep fall into mud they seek to jump out and stay far from it. I think you can make the application: Sinners often love sin and have no compunction to stop, but when Christians sin, they want out as quickly as possible!

(Transition) And this leads to our next point:

6. Do you hold unwaveringly to your Savior Jesus Christ?

I want to rephrase this question: Is there anything that could pull you away from your commitment to Jesus Christ? Would you be willing to trade it away to the highest bidder? Or, are you totally committed to him?

Notice what Jesus said about this in Matthew 10:32—33: "So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, (33) but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven."

This is why Paul left us this testimony of his commitment toward Christ in Philippians 1:20—21, "I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. (21) For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."

That should be the testimony of all Christians! Can you say that with the Apostle Paul? If so, then you can know that Christ dwells within you.

(Transition) My final question in this checklist is this:

7. Do you believe the Bible is the holy, inerrant Word of God and is the highest authority of the Christian Faith?

I want you to consider another courageous statement from Paul in 2 Corinthians 13:8. He said, "For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth." Is this how you feel about the Scriptures? Do you hold it in the highest esteem? When contemporary moral issues disagree with God's Word, do you always side with truth as revealed in the Bible? This is the mark of true Believers!

One of the grave practices of Christians is embracing the world's moral standards. That's because worldly-minded people often endorse and normalize anti-Biblical expressions of behavior. But remember, the Bible does not authorize you, me, or any government institution to dictate morality. That belongs to the One and only God—the Author of Life—and he has forever preserved it in his written Word. The Bible alone discloses the Christian's standard for living. And like Paul, our duty is to wholly stand by it regardless of the world's endorsements.

Christians stand by the holy Scriptures because they are the actual words of God! They are perfect, unchanging, and all-powerful! 2 Timothy 3:16 says, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." Folks, there is no other book in the world that rivals it!

If you hold firmly to the Bible and practice its commands, you can be certain you are Born Again and on your way to heaven.

(Transition) In closing, I want to say this:

Conclusion

Everything I presented in this checklist is to help prepare you for your ultimate destination: Heaven or Hell. That's why I'll close with the words of 2 Peter 1:10—11. "Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, (11) and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

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