

How to be Sure You are Going to Heaven

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From His Heart Ministries

Unless otherwise specified, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New American Standard version of the Bible.

FROM THE AUTHOR:

I am so glad that you have this booklet in your hand and are preparing to read it. My desire is to be a help to those who struggle with doubting their eternity.

As a Pastor, I have had many people confess to me that they have frightening and terrible doubts concerning their salvation. They wonder if they are true believers. They are concerned that they might be missing something. They are worried that they might not go to heaven when they die.

If you are doubting your eternal destination, this resource booklet is for you. My prayer is that the following pages will provide you with great assurance that Jesus truly lives in your heart and you are on the highway to heaven.

Love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Schreve". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "S".

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First Baptist Church, Texarkana, Texas

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Mrs. Smith, the first-grade Sunday school teacher, was talking to her class about heaven. She wanted to know if the children understood what enables a person to go to heaven. She asked them, "Boys and girls, if I sold everything I have and gave the money to the poor, would that allow me to go to heaven?" The class gave a resounding, "No!" She went on, "What if I clean the entire church every single week, would that get me to heaven?" Again her class answered, "No!" "Ok, ok," she replied, pretending to think very hard about her next question, "What if I were good to my husband and children and kind to all the pets in the neighborhood, even the rotten little dog next door who always digs up my flowers?" The children were still not satisfied and again replied in unison, "No!!" Hopeful that she might now get the answer she was looking for, the teacher shot back, "Well if none of those good works will get me to heaven, then what *will* get me to heaven?" Little Timmy quickly responded, "Mrs. Smith, in order to get to heaven, you gotta be dead!"

Nearly everyone I know wants to go to heaven when he/she dies. People want to live forever with God in that beautiful place called heaven where there is no longer any death or mourning or crying or pain (Rev. 21:4). **But while so many desire to go to heaven one day, a good number of these people have doubts as to whether or not they will make it. Does that describe you?**

God promises heaven to everyone who has really and truly turned from sin and received Jesus as Savior and Lord. And many have done just what God has said to do, but they **STILL** have nagging doubts and gnawing fears about their eternal destination. They wonder if they “did it” right. They wonder if they really belong to Jesus. They wonder if they truly are on the highway to heaven.

Living in constant doubt about eternity is a miserable way to go through life. But I’ve got some great news ... God doesn’t want you to live a moment longer with these debilitating doubts. The purpose of this booklet is to help you receive assurance in your salvation and know with certainty that

you belong to the Lord Jesus and will one day experience the glories of heaven with Him.

FOUR CATEGORIES OF PEOPLE ... WHICH ONE ARE YOU?

I believe you are in one of four categories of people who are reading this booklet:

PERSON #1 - This is the person who is not saved and knows it. Perhaps you picked up this booklet because you are curious about what it takes to be saved and want to know more. I appreciate your honesty, and I'm thankful that you have taken the time to learn more about what the Bible says about salvation. I know God wants to work a miracle in your life today and show you what it means to become a genuine believer in Jesus.

PERSON #2 - This is the person who is not truly saved but thinks he/she is. This is a dangerous place to be because you are deceiving yourself and trying to convince yourself that you are a child of God. The

sad reality is that you are not. You are like those Jesus spoke about in Matthew 7 who meet the Lord in judgment and say, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name cast out demons and in your name perform many miracles?” The Lord then replies to these, “I never knew you; depart from me you who practice lawlessness” (Matt. 7:23). Based on this passage, there will be many who think they will go to heaven but will not . . . and the reason they won’t is because they did not really know the Lord. They had religion but no personal relationship with Jesus Christ, the only Savior and Lord. If you are this type of person, I pray today that the Lord will show you how much you need Him and bring you to the place where you truly surrender your life to Jesus.

PERSON #3 - This is the person who is truly saved but is living in fear and doubt of his/her eternal destination. Perhaps you have been genuinely saved, but you don’t have the peace and assurance of salvation that God desires for all His children. You simply can’t seem to escape the doubt that

you may be Person #2 who will hear the Lord say at the judgment, “I never knew you; depart from me.” I pray today that the Holy Spirit will set you free and give you confident assurance that you truly are His child who is on the highway to heaven.

PERSON #4 - This is the person who is truly saved and knows it beyond a shadow of a doubt. You have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ alone for your salvation and are walking confidently with Him. This assurance is exactly what God desires for His children to enjoy. He wants you to know that you belong to Him and are going to live with Him forever in heaven when you die.

THE BELOVED DISCIPLE

Let me take a moment to tell you about the Apostle John. He is known as the “beloved disciple” because of his close relationship with Jesus. He wrote a good portion of the New Testament, including the Gospel of John, First John, Second John, Third John and the Book of Revelation.

The Gospel of John and First John are foundational books regarding salvation and assurance of salvation. In the Gospel of John, John tells us *why* he took the time to write his account of the life of Jesus: *“These have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name”* (Jn. 20:31). In other words, the reason John wrote his Gospel (the word “Gospel” literally means good news) was so that you and I would truly believe that Jesus is the promised Messiah, and we would receive eternal life by simply placing our faith in Him.

First John is a letter also written with one main purpose: to give us the blessed assurance of eternal life in the Lord Jesus Christ. By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, John wrote, *“He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. **These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life**”* (1 Jn. 5:12-13). Therefore, from the Gospel of

John and First John we learn that the Lord wants us to believe in Him, receive Him, and KNOW that we belong to Him.

THREE TRUTHS TO SILENCE THE DOUBTS

1. GOD WANTS YOU TO BE SURE ABOUT YOUR SALVATION.

God doesn't want you to have a "guess so," "hope so," "maybe so" mentality when it comes to your salvation and your eternal destination. He wants you to have a "know so" relationship with Him. He wants you to be sure that you know Him and are going to heaven when you die.

When I was in college I had to walk to the laundromat every week or two to wash my clothes. It was definitely a boring chore, but it was nonetheless necessary. One day, I went to the laundromat with my friend, Bart. It was always more fun to go with a friend so that you could pass the time (a person can only study so long amid the whine of noisy washers and dryers). While enduring the

seemingly endless spin cycle, I mustered up the courage and said to Bart, “If you were to die tonight, do you know for certain that you would go to heaven?” I was surprised when Bart replied, “No, I don’t. And neither do you. No one can know if he is going to heaven when he dies. That is just one of those questions that we can’t know until **after** we die.”

I happened to have a Bible with me, and I showed Bart the verse in 1 John 5:13. I said, “Bart, look at what it says right here in the Bible, ‘*These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.*’ Bart, the word *know* used in this verse means ‘to know with absolute certainty.’” Bart did not have a good reply to that straightforward verse.

Here is the point of that encounter at the laundromat: while some may think you cannot know, **God has made it CRYSTAL CLEAR that He wants us to know we are His and bound for heaven.**

YOU CAN'T KNOW? HOW ABSURD!

It is absurd for you not to know if you are truly saved. What is the greatest relationship a human being can ever have? Without question, the greatest relationship is one with Almighty God. That is the most wonderful, most life-changing relationship of all. How ludicrous it would be if a Christian didn't even know that he/she were a Christian! How ludicrous it would be for God to not want me to know that I had a relationship with him! Do you think Paul ever thought, "I wonder if I'm a Christian?" No!! What about Peter, James or John? No!! Those guys never wondered about that because they had such an assurance about their relationship with Jesus.

ARE YOU MARRIED?

Without question, the most important human-to-human relationship I have is with my wife, Debbie. We have been happily married since 1986. If you were to meet me for the first time and ask me if I were married, what would you think of me if I

gave this response? “Well, hmmm, I don’t really know. I think I am. I mean, I hope I am. You see, no one can really know that for sure.” If I answered that way, I believe you would start thinking, “What are you smoking, pal? How can you not know if you are married? It is not a tough question. It is an obvious yes or no answer.”

Listen, I KNOW that I am married. I was there when I got married. Debbie reminds me often that I am married (just kidding). It is absurd to think that a married person wouldn’t know if he/she is married. Likewise, it is absurd to think that you wouldn’t know if you had a true relationship with the living God. You can be sure with rock-solid assurance that you know Jesus because God wants you to know that.

YOU DON’T KNOW? WHAT MISERY!

Not only is it absurd to think you can’t know, it is miserable for you to not know if you are truly saved. There is no peace. . . there is no joy . . . there is no excitement . . . there is no witness for the person who is

living in doubt. Listen, it is pretty hard to share with another person the joy and peace of being a Christian when you don't even know if you are one. It is a terrible thing, a miserable thing to live in this state of doubt.

I read about a woman who struggled with doubting her salvation. She was in terrible misery and wrote this letter to her pastor:

I have made public my profession of faith and have asked Christ to come into my life five different times. I have been baptized over and again. I don't have assurance that I am really a Christian. I am struggling so. I'll do well for a while and then I will get into this state of doubt, and it just consumes me. When that happens I just withdraw; I just shrivel up, and I am just crippled with fear. I am no good to my husband. I am no good as a Mom to my child. I just lock myself in my bedroom, and I will just cry and cry and cry, and I'll read my Bible, and I'll just beg God to show me if I really belong to him. I used to have peace. I used to have a

flame burning inside me, but I don't have that anymore. Please, I am begging you, help me.

Can you feel her pain? She is miserable because she doesn't know for sure. Tragically, she is not the only one who lives with this terrible fear and doubt. A lot of people who come to church week after week after week live exactly the same way. They don't know for certain that they belong to Jesus, and they live life like a human question mark: bent over, head down, burdened into a curl of uncertainty, saying, "I don't know for sure! I wish I could know for sure!"

FROM A "?" TO A "!"

God does not want you to live in doubt, bent over like a question mark . . . He wants you to lift up your head and live like an exclamation point! He doesn't want you to be a doubting Christian. He wants you to be a shouting Christian. We teach our kids that little song, "If you're saved and you know it, clap your hands . . . say amen . . . stomp

your feet . . . and put money in the collection plate (a little pastoral humor).” We teach our kids that song because God says we can KNOW that we are saved.

2. GOD WANTS YOU TO UNDERSTAND YOUR SALVATION.

One of the reasons many people live as a question mark is because they don't fully understand their salvation. One of the greatest passages in the Bible that helps us understand salvation is found in Ephesians 2: *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them”* (Eph. 2:8-10).

Salvation = Grace + Faith + NOTHING!

Do you know what so many people do with the salvation equation? They add works to it. They say, “Well, sure it is a work of

grace and faith . . . but it also depends on my works.” Nothing could be further from the truth! God clearly says that salvation is “NOT AS A RESULT OF WORKS.” Salvation has NOTHING to do with your good works or my good works. It has EVERYTHING to do with Jesus’ good work on the cross. It has everything to do with His grace . . . and our faith in His sacrifice for us.

IT’S LIKE ELECTRICITY.

Think about grace and faith as you would electricity. If you want to make toast in the electric toaster, you **MUST** have electricity. If you take a properly functioning toaster and fail to plug it into the electrical outlet, the heater coils don’t get red and hot. An unplugged toaster can’t get the bread toasted no matter how hard you try. The toaster **MUST** be plugged into the electrical power before it will work correctly.

The toaster represents your life. “Grace” is the electrical power . . . and “faith” is plugging into the electrical power. Your life

will light up with salvation ONLY when you, by faith, plug into God's grace. It will happen only when you see what Jesus did for you on the cross and receive that as a gift from God. As Adrian Rogers so aptly said, "Grace is God's acceptance of you . . . and faith is your acceptance of God's acceptance of you." True salvation never comes about through works—"not as a result of works, that no one should boast" (Eph. 2:9). You don't work to get the toaster on . . . you simply plug it in.

WHAT ABOUT WORKS?

Perhaps you are saying, "Wait a minute! I don't understand something. What about works? Doesn't the Bible say that works are important? I've read somewhere in the Book of James where he talks about faith without works is dead. Works are really important, Jeff. How can you not see that?!"

Works are indeed important . . . but **works don't produce salvation; salvation produces works.** The text in Ephesians reads, "*For by grace you have been saved*

through faith.” It goes on to tell us that we were “**created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). You are not saved **BY** good works. You are saved **FOR** good works. Good works are a by-product of being genuinely saved.

James tells us this: “*You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works*” (Jas. 2:18). Genuine faith always produces works, but works never produce faith. When you put your puny little hand of faith in God’s great big hand of grace, your life begins to change and good works begin to blossom through you. Works are just a by-product of true salvation.

WHAT ABOUT FEELINGS?

People often begin to doubt their salvation because they will start to review their works. They say, “Well, I don’t feel that I do very well in this area . . . I often fail over there in that area . . . and I have such a problem with jealousy and pride and lust and greed.

I must not be a Christian **because I certainly don't FEEL like one.**" Listen, salvation is not based on feelings. Salvation is based on faith. It is not about how you "feel." It is about how you "faith." The young woman who wrote her Pastor about her terrible doubts is struggling because she is walking by feelings and not by faith.

God does not want you to let your feelings control your life. Feelings are up and down. Sometimes you feel as if you really love the Lord . . . and sometimes you don't. Sometimes you feel as if you're really walking with the Lord . . . and sometimes you don't. Sometimes you feel like coming to church . . . and sometimes you don't. It does not mean you are not a Christian because you sometimes FEEL so disconnected from the Lord. I've been married for many years. What if I wake one morning and don't feel very married? Does that mean I am not married because I don't FEEL married? Of course not!! Regardless of my feelings, the fact remains that I am married. I was married on March 15, 1986, and that will never change!

When you put your faith and trust in God's grace and God's grace alone, you are saved. Salvation is not dependent on feelings. Salvation is dependent on faith. **Have you honestly, truly and sincerely put your complete faith and trust in the Lord Jesus and Him alone? Have you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and received Him as your personal Savior and Lord?** If so, rest assured in the fact that the God, who cannot lie, has promised to save all who call upon Him for salvation (Rom. 10:13); if you have never done that, now is the time ... right now!

3. GOD WANTS YOU TO TEST YOUR SALVATION.

Do you want to know if you are truly saved? Did you know that you can take a test from Scripture to tell if you really belong to Him? You can test yourself just as a jeweler would test a stone to see if it were genuine or not. In 2 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul wrote this: *“Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not*

recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you – unless indeed you fail the test?” (2 Cor. 13:5).

THE SAVIOR TEST – IN WHOM ARE YOU TRUSTING FOR SALVATION?

Paul told that jailer in Philippi, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved*” (Acts 16:31). Jesus Christ is the Son of God and God the Son. He is the one and only Savior. Do not be fooled by an imposter, because the devil promotes counterfeit Christs in order to deceive. 2 Cor. 11:4 tells us of “*another Jesus whom we have not preached.*” Watch out for any cult that promotes a Jesus who is less than God. A Jesus who is less than Creator God is “another Jesus” . . . and that imposter cannot save you.

Suppose you were to go skydiving. Would it really matter what pack you strapped on before jumping out of the plane? If a school backpack looked just like a parachute, wouldn't that school backpack be sufficient to float you safely to the ground? NO!!!

Don't be fooled by an imitation Jesus. **Are you believing and trusting in the real Savior of the Bible, Jesus Christ . . . or are you trusting in a counterfeit Jesus?**

Do you know in whom most people trust for salvation? Not a counterfeit Jesus. Most people trust in themselves. When I talk to people about spiritual things, I often ask them, "What would you say to God if He were to ask you why He should let you into heaven?" The most common answer to that question goes something like this: "Well, I'm a pretty good person. I am a church member. I give some money. I have been baptized. I sing in the choir. I teach a Sunday school lesson. I do this, and I do that." They give a laundry list of all the good things they did and do. **Who is their Savior? In whom are they trusting? Obviously, they are trusting in themselves.** They are trusting in their good works to get them to heaven. **NEWSFLASH: No one can get to heaven by earning it through good works.** Remember, it is "*not as a result of works, that no one should boast.*"

The only one who can save you is Jesus . . . so you can't be trusting in yourself. You have to trust in Christ alone. Salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

How do you answer The Savior Test?

THE SIN TEST—HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT SIN?

“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not practice the truth” (1 Jn. 1:6). One of the ways that you can know if you are a true believer in Jesus involves your attitude toward sin. A true believer knows sin is wrong and doesn't want to sin against God. An unbeliever loves to sin and doesn't really give sinful actions much thought.

I became a Christian when I was seventeen years old. I didn't understand a lot about Christianity. I just knew that the Lord had spoken to my heart, convicted me of sin and shown me my need for Him. When I

humbly and sincerely asked Him to save me, He did. How did I know my life was different and the Lord was now living inside of me? I knew it was real because my attitude toward sin changed.

About two weeks after I received Christ as Savior and Lord, I was getting ready to commit a particular sin . . . a sin I would have normally committed with gusto. Right before I was to participate in that sin, the Lord convicted my heart. He said, “Don’t do this. It is wrong.” I had never had a thought like that before. I knew something had changed in me because my attitude toward sin was SO DIFFERENT.

Someone has well said, “When you get saved, God doesn’t fix it so you can’t sin anymore . . . He fixes it so you can’t sin and enjoy it anymore.” Do you still enjoy sinning? If you can continue to sin and feel no knife in your heart, no conviction from the Lord that what you are doing is WRONG, then you have to wonder if you really know the Lord. **When Jesus lives inside your heart, it is impossible to sin**

and not feel conviction.

How do you answer The Sin Test?

THE SPIRIT TEST – DOES GOD’S SPIRIT GIVE YOU CONFIRMATION?

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16). The Holy Spirit lives inside every true believer. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity (God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit). Jesus lives in the heart of every Christian through the Holy Spirit. The Bible tells us, *“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own”* (1 Cor. 6:19). Do you have that internal witness from the Holy Spirit that says, “You belong to Me?”

How do you answer The Spirit Test?

THE SANCTIFICATION TEST – HOW ARE YOU LIVING?

“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:6). The Sanctification Test is the test to see if you are growing spiritually. Sanctified means “set apart.” The Lord comes into your life so that He can shine out of your life. When a person is truly saved and inhabited by Jesus, that person begins to act and react like Jesus. As Paul said, “[He] manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place” (2 Cor. 2:14).

Be honest, are you any more like Jesus than you were before you met him? Can anyone tell a difference in you? Does anyone ever say, “You are different. Something has happened to you. Tell me about it.” Is there any evidence that the Lord is working in your life? Is there the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him coming from you? Do you respond differently to problems and pressures and difficulties than you used to? Are you growing in Christ-likeness?

How do you answer The Sanctification

Test?

THE SIBLING TEST – DO YOU LIKE TO BE AROUND CHRISTIANS?

“We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death” (1 Jn. 3:14). The Sibling Test has to do with your love for other Christians. Do you like to spend time with the family of God?

Before I became a Christian, I didn't want to hang out with Christians. I didn't want to go to church. I didn't like spending time with believers. They seemed weird and made me uncomfortable. When I got saved, however, all of that changed. I suddenly had a longing within me to be with God's people. There was a desire within me to sing the songs of the faith, to praise the Lord and study the Bible.

When Jesus comes to live inside you, you begin to love the people of God. It is just a natural by-product of true salvation.

How do you answer The Sibling Test?

GRADING YOURSELF

How did you do on the five test questions? Did you pass or did you fail? It is okay to fail . . . because you can get saved right now. Jesus loves you, died for you, rose again for you and wants to come into your life. He wants to save you and change you forever. Will you open your heart to Him?

Sincerely, genuinely, and with a contrite heart, pray this simple prayer:

Lord Jesus, I need you. I know I am a sinner . . . and I can't save myself. Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God and God the Son. I believe you died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead. I ask you to forgive all my sins, come into my life and save me. I surrender my life to you, Jesus. Because I meant every word of this prayer, I believe that you have answered this prayer . . . and I thank you for saving me!

MY STORY OF DOUBT

I became a Christian when I was a seventeen year old senior in high school. At nineteen, I began to doubt that I was really saved. My church invited a guest evangelist to preach. He was a very strong preacher and a vivid storyteller. He preached for a week about knowing for sure about salvation. He was working hard to make sure no one was trusting in good works to get him or her to heaven. After he was finished, however, many saved people began to doubt. I was one of those.

In one sermon, he talked about the wheat and the tares and the death angel who comes to remove the tares from the wheat (Matt. 13). He said (and I paraphrase), “You are here today sitting in this church pew. You are a Sunday school teacher. The death angel comes down this aisle and stops at your row. He grabs you by the arm and hauls you away because you aren’t really saved. You are just a tare among the wheat.” He dramatized the whole story . . . and it seemed so real. I literally had a

nightmare that the death angel came and hauled me away to hell.

For about a month, I doubted my salvation. I didn't witness any that month. I had no joy, only fear and anxiety. Needless to say, I did not sleep during that time. There was no peace and no assurance, only doubts. I felt that God had abandoned me, and I didn't understand why.

Finally, I came to a place in my life where I just said, "Lord, I can't live like this anymore. I can't live with all these doubts. Lord, if I never did this salvation thing correctly . . . if I didn't really come to know you when I was seventeen . . . if I'm just a tare among the wheat, then I want You to save me. Jesus, I believe in you, and I want you to come into my life and be real to me. I surrender all of me to You."

Before I got off my knees I said this, "Lord, if these doubts have been coming from the devil and not from you, then show me that too. Regardless, Lord, if You came into my life when I was seventeen, or if You came in

my life just now, I **know** from this day forward that I belong to you.”

It was only a couple of days later when the Lord spoke to my heart sweetly and lovingly. He said, “Jeff, you know when you asked Me to come into your heart when you were seventeen years old . . . and you really meant that prayer and believed on Me, that is when I came in. I’ve changed your life. It is okay that you asked me to come in again, but I don’t want you to doubt anymore.” God gave me such assurance of my salvation, and I’ve never doubted since that time.

If you have suffered from chronic doubts, may my story become your story. May you close this booklet with great assurance. Remember, you are meant to be an exclamation point, not a question mark. Do business with the Lord in prayer and believe His wonderful promise, “Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved” (Rom. 10:13).