

## **HOW TO KNOW THAT YOU ARE SAVED**

### **1 Thessalonians 1:4-10**

**By Andy Manning**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. If you died today, are you 100% sure that you would go to heaven? Are you sure that you are a Christian? Are you sure that you have been born again? Are you sure that you have been saved? Are you sure that you have a saving relationship with Jesus Christ?
2. Our subject today is assurance of salvation.
3. **John MacArthur** said that "assurance is one's confidence that he possesses that eternal salvation."
4. Are you plagued with doubts about your salvation? You're just not sure. You even worry about it.
5. God wants us to be sure. This is the reason for the letter of 1 John.
  - i. **1 John 5:13** "I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life."
  - ii. God doesn't want you to be a question mark Christian; He wants you to be an exclamation mark Christian.
  - iii. God doesn't want you to be a maybe so, hope so Christian. He wants you to be a know-so Christian.
6. The Bible commands to be sure.
  - i. **2 Peter 1:10** "Therefore, brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election"
  - ii. **2 Corinthians 13:5** "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith. Examine yourselves."
7. It is not a sin to have doubts about your salvation. You can't force the doubts to go away. But wouldn't it be wonderful to not have doubts? Wouldn't be wonderful to have a confidence, an assurance, an inner peace about your eternal destination?
8. In scripture God has given us some ways to test ourselves; to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith. These are tests that we can use to confirm our calling. The purpose of these is not to judge others, but to judge yourself.

#### **II. TEXT: 1 Thessalonians 1:4-10**

1. *4 For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5 because our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, in the Holy Spirit, and with full assurance. You know how we lived among you for your benefit,*
  - i. "We know... that he has chosen you."
    1. The church is often called the elect in the New Testament. The chosen ones. This is a reminder that salvation is always of God's initiative. Before we can believe, God must draw us, open our eyes, and enable us to believe. There are two views of election. Both agree that the sinner is unable and unwilling to turn to God on his own, but requires the prevenient grace of God to draw and enable. The disagreement is whether or not this prevenient grace is

irresistible (Calvinism) or resistible (Arminianism). I believe in the latter, because if God's grace is irresistible, then that means that God only wants to save some, which is a clear violation of God's character (love) and of His word (2 Pt 3:9; 1 Tim 2:4).

2. So, when Paul uses the word "chosen," he is referring to salvation. "We know that God has saved you."
3. No one can know for certain whether or not another person was saved, because only God knows a person's heart. But Paul was confident of their salvation because he saw the signs of salvation in them.
- ii. "because our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, in the Holy Spirit, and with full assurance."
  1. These were not signs that Paul saw in the church, but which accompanied his ministry in Thessalonica. When they brought the gospel message to Thessalonica, God accompanied the message with power, the Holy Spirit, and full assurance.
  2. The passage does not elaborate what Paul meant by these terms, but it could very well be that God enabled Paul to do miracles, exorcisms, to prophecy, and perhaps gave him great boldness (full assurance). These were signs to Paul that there was going to be a great response to the gospel among the Thessalonians.
- iii. In the next few verses, Paul lays out the signs that he saw in them that gave him confidence that they were truly saved.
2. *6 and you yourselves became imitators of us and of the Lord when, in spite of severe persecution, you welcomed the message with joy from the Holy Spirit.*
  - i. On multiple occasions Paul had faced persecution, but he continued to preach Christ; he continued to pursue God's mission.
  - ii. And the Thessalonians imitated his example because even though they faced intense persecution when the gospel made it to their city, they kept the faith.
3. *7 As a result, you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 For the word of the Lord rang out from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place that your faith, in God has gone out. Therefore, we don't need to say anything,*
  - i. After they became Christians, the Thessalonian church became missionaries themselves, spreading the gospel throughout the province of Macedonia, and to the neighboring province of Achaia.
4. *9 for they themselves report what kind of reception we had from you: how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.*
  - i. The Thessalonians had a reputation all over Macedonia and Achaia for how they welcomed the gospel and turned from their sins to God.

### III. THREE SIGNS OF SALVATION

## 1. You choose Christ in spite of persecution.

- i. **1 Thessalonians 1:6** “and you yourselves became imitators of us and of the Lord when, in spite of severe persecution, you welcomed the message with joy from the Holy Spirit.”
- ii. Acts 17 tells the story of how the church in Thessalonica started. Paul spent the first three Sabbaths teaching in the synagogue, and many people believed. But some Jews formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They attacked one believer’s house – Jason; probably where the Christians had been meeting – and searched for Paul and his team. When they couldn’t find them, they dragged Jason and some other Christians before the city officials and accused them of treason against Rome. Later that night, the believers in Thessalonica helped Paul and Silas leave the city in safety. Because this, Paul worried about the new church. As the weeks went by, he wanted to know if they were still following Jesus, or had they been intimidated and discouraged by the persecution and resistance. Eventually Paul sent Timothy to get a status report, and Timothy found a living and thriving church. This gave Paul confidence that their faith was real because even though they faced persecution for the gospel, they stood firm.
- iii. How do we know when someone truly believes in something? They are willing to endure hardship for it.
- iv. One of the most convincing proofs of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is that the early witnesses claimed to see Jesus alive, and then when threatened with death if they did not recant, stood firm. They were willing to die for their faith in the resurrection, and no one dies for a lie. This proves that the early believers truly believed in what they saw. They wouldn’t die for a claim if they knew it was false. What’s the point in that?
- v. How do we know when a disciple has genuine faith? They are willing to endure persecution for Christ. When they faced the choice, “Deny Christ or face persecution,” they choose persecution.
- vi. We don’t experience much persecution in America because we are blessed to live in a country that codifies and reveres religious liberty. It is called our first freedom because it is the first right mentioned in the Bill of Rights.
- vii. But lately it has become more common to see persecution in the United States, especially because of the LGBTQ rights movement. At first they fought for the freedom to live how they wanted, and they got it. But now they are demanding that Christians approve of and celebrate their lifestyle. And we’re seeing many Christians stand firm no matter the cost.
- viii. Aaron and Melissa Klein owned a small bakery in Oregon. When they refused to make a wedding cake for a gay couple, the state of Oregon hit them with a \$135,000 fine. Protests took place outside their store. Online trolls harassed them. Local wedding planners, photographers, and florists cut all ties with them. Instead of caving in and denying Christ, the Kleins have spent the past ten years in court, and have already closed down their business. When we see this kind of reaction to persecution, we can have

confidence that their faith is genuine. Their salvation is authentic. These people are true believers.

- ix. Persecution purifies the church. Every church is made up of true believers of fake believers. In times of peace, it is hard to distinguish between the two. But in times of persecution, the fake believers fall away, and only the true believers remain. It is hard to know which you are if you have only followed Jesus in times of peace and prosperity. The question is, How will you respond when your faith in Christ threatens your finances; your financial security; your freedom; your health, etc.?

## 2. You have a heart for evangelism.

- i. **1 Thessalonians 1:8** “For the word of the Lord rang out from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place that your faith, in God has gone out.”
- ii. After becoming Christians, the Thessalonians became missionaries themselves. They spread the gospel through their own province of Macedonia, and then to Achaia, and then even beyond that.
- iii. True believers are evangelistic.
- iv. When discover something that you really, you can’t help but share it. You want to tell everyone about it. Whether it is a new restaurant, a new clothing store, etc. This is why bumper stickers and t-shirts are so popular. People want to tell everyone about the products and services and experiences that they are excited about, and bumper stickers and t-shirts are an easy way to share. It is the same with Jesus. When you meet Jesus – really meet Him – you want to tell everyone about Him. When Jesus heals you, or changes your life, or heals your marriage, you want everyone to know!
- v. **Thomas Watson** “Our promoting... the conversion of others is a signal evidence of our salvation.”
- vi. When you get saved, you start to see life from an eternal perspective. You start to see people differently. Every person you meet is either going to spend eternity in heaven or hell, and hell is a terrible place of eternal torment. You don’t want anyone to go there. You want to do everything you can to reach as many people as possible.
- vii. **Dawson Trotman** (The Navigators) “Soul winners are not soul winners because of what they know, but because of Who they know, and how well they know Him, and how much they long for others to know Him.”
- viii. When you come to know Jesus Christ, you immediately learn what He is passionate about. He came to seek and save the lost (Lk 19:10). His heart breaks for His lost children. He wants everyone to be saved; none to perish. He loves the world. And you can’t help but adopt the same attitude as your Savior.
- ix. If you have a passion for souls, a burden for the lost, and strong desire to see the lost people around come to Christ, then that’s a good sign that you are saved.

### 3. You live a life of repentance.

- i. When the Thessalonians came to Christ, they repented of their sins. They didn't just accept as true certain theological propositions. They repented of their sins.
- ii. **1 Thessalonians 1:9** "for they themselves report what kind of reception we had from you: how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God"
- iii. This verse gives a good definition of repentance:
  - 1. Turning to God. This means obedience to God's positive commands. You are going to start doing whatever God tells you to do. You're going to start going to church, and tithing, and sharing with those in need, and serving in church, and teaching your kids the Bible, and treating your spouse right, etc.
  - 2. Turning from sin. Repentance involves changing your ways. It means throwing away the illegal drugs; it means breaking up with your non-Christian girlfriend; it means washing your mouth and cleaning up your language; it means moving out until you are ready to get married instead of living together before marriage; it means stop stealing; stop lying; stop looking at pornography; stop getting drunk.
  - 3. To serve God. Your motive for repentance is not earn your way to heaven. It is not to impress God. It is not to impress others. It is not to live a happier, longer life. The motive is to serve God. To glorify Him. To please Him. To make Him look good. You love Him, and you want to do whatever makes Him happy.
- iv. In other words, true salvation results in life change.
- v. **John MacArthur** "Scripture knows nothing of a salvation without repentance, and that always involves turning from sin. Jesus did not come to grant sinners perfection in the next life while leaving them to continue in sin in this one. On the contrary, He "gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds". As a result, those who come to Him and truly receive the living water of eternal salvation have "been freed from sin, [and become] slaves of righteousness ... and enslaved to God."
- vi. I remember when I became a Christian. It was a radical conversion. God changed me from the inside out in so many ways. I went from cursing to not cursing overnight. I went from not being bored with the Bible to not being able to get enough. I went from being disobedient to my parents, to loving and respecting them. I went from not caring about my schoolwork to becoming one of the best students in school.
- vii. Now, if you became a Christian as a young child, then you probably didn't experience a radical change. But here's a question you can ponder: Do you hate sin? Do you deeply desire to please God? Are you working to become more obedient every day?

- viii. A lot of people call themselves Christians because they “believe” in Jesus. But even the devil and the demons believe in Jesus. If your belief in Jesus doesn’t include radical repentance of sin and obedience to God’s word, then you aren’t saved.
- ix. This is what the apostle James meant when he wrote that “faith without works is dead (James 2:17).”
- x. Jesus said that some people are going to die and stand before God and be shocked to find out that they aren’t going to be welcomed into heaven.
  - 1. **Matthew 7:21-23** “21 Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, didn’t we prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, and do many miracles in your name?’ 23 Then I will announce to them, ‘I never knew you. Depart from me, you lawbreakers!’”
  - 2. Just because you call Jesus “Lord”, and just because you pray, and just because you believe, and just because you go to church doesn’t mean you will go to heaven. Do you do the will of God? Have you lived a life of wholehearted repentance from sin and obedience to God’s commands?
- xi. Don’t get me wrong. Salvation does not mean perfection; but it is a total change of direction. It does not mean you are sinless, but you sin less and feel worse.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

- 1. Can you imagine spending a ton of money on a fancy Rolex watch, only to find out later that you it is a fake? You were deceived. How terrible!
- 2. Sadly, many churches are filled with deceived Christians. Christians who think they are Christians, but they aren’t. Either the church has deceived them by not teaching the truth; or Satan has deceived them into thinking they have the real thing when they don’t; or they are self-deceived Christians, to prideful to admit that they’ve spent all these years in the church, but they’re not truly saved. How terrible!
- 3. At Church Acadiana one of my primary passions is that no one in our church be self-deceived. I want you to know where you stand with God. If you are not saved, then I want you to know it. If you are saved, then I want you to know it. But I don’t want anyone to die, stand before God, and say, “I went to Church Acadiana for years, and I thought I was saved!”
- 4. Look for the signs of authentic salvation:
  - i. You choose Christ despite persecution.
  - ii. You have a heart for evangelism.
  - iii. You live a life of repentance.
- 5. If you see these signs in your life, then there’s a good change that you are saved. But if you don’t, if you have doubts, then you may not be saved.
- 6. Today, if you have doubts, I invite you turn to Christ for salvation once and for all.