

How can I know that I am saved?

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How can I know that I am saved? It's a question I've asked myself a lot over this past year: a question I'm not the first to ask, and I'm sure I won't be the last. For me, this question came up because I was doubting my salvation. I wasn't doubting the truth of the gospel; I was sure that Jesus was the Son of God who lived, died, was raised to life, and ascended into heaven. I was sure that his death on the cross paid the price for sinners, that they may be made right with God, and come to know him personally. I was sure that people got saved—but I doubted whether I was one of them.

I was asking these questions because I had been doing what Paul instructed the Corinthians to do: "Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith" ([2 Cor 13:5](#)). I was testing myself (to the best of my ability), looking at how I spoke, how I acted, how I treated those around me. I was comparing my life to what I read in the Bible. I read that we are to be holy, because God is ([1 Pet 1:16](#)); we are to "abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul" ([1 Pet 2:11](#)); we are to "put to death therefore what is earthly in you" ([Col 3:5](#)). I read that I was to live for God, and to love him with my heart, soul, strength and mind ([Luke 10:27](#)). That was the standard for being a Christian, the level you had to meet, or at least come close to.

In my examination, I fell miserably short of that standard. I was not holy just as God was holy, and some days it felt like I wasn't even *trying* to be holy. It didn't feel like I was abstaining from sinful desires, but like I was falling into the same sins over and over again. It felt like my earthly nature was surviving and thriving. It didn't feel like I was living for God, and I certainly wasn't loving him with all my heart, soul, strength and mind. I fell short of the Christian standard. The saying goes, "If it swims like a duck and quacks like a duck, then it's probably a duck". I felt like I wasn't looking like a Christian, or acting like a Christian, so was it possible that I wasn't actually a Christian?

I doubted my salvation because I looked at all the sin in my life and said, "Surely a Christian cannot be this sinful."

So I spoke to some trusted Christian friends, and they pointed me back to what I was so sure about: how we are saved. We are saved because God the Father "chose us in him before the foundation of the world" ([Eph 1:4](#)). We're saved because "Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God..." ([1 Pet 3:18](#)). We're saved because the Spirit now works in us, shaping us into the image of Jesus ([2 Cor 3:18](#); [2 Tim 1:7](#)). We are saved because God saves us.

If our salvation were based even partly on us then our performance would matter. If we saved ourselves, even a little bit, then it would matter whether we'd been more sinful last week, or better with Bible reading and prayer this week. But, as Paul writes:

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. ([Eph 2:8-9](#))

Our salvation is based on the work God has done and on his generosity, not on the work we are doing. We are saved, from beginning to end, by grace.

So how did this give me assurance? Firstly, it showed me that feeling unsaved didn't change whether I was saved or not. If salvation is from God, then my feelings can't affect it. Secondly, it showed me that I wasn't perfect, but no other Christian is either. We are all sinful, both before and after the Spirit begins his work in us, and we all need to be saved by God's grace. The Spirit doesn't make us sinless overnight, but he changes our attitude toward sin: we do not revel in sin as non-Christians do, we repent of it. We pray that God would forgive us and make us more like his Son. The mark of a Christian is not a lack of sin, but a repentant attitude toward sin.

And thirdly, after seeing that salvation isn't through how good we were or how good we've become, I was reminded that we are saved by grace *through faith* in Jesus Christ. As Paul puts it: "If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" ([Rom 10:9](#)).

You will be saved, no ifs or buts about it. That's how I knew that I was a Christian, and that these promises applied to me. I knew because I called Jesus my Lord and my Saviour, and I knew that he had the power to save by his resurrection from the dead. If you believe these things, then the Spirit is at work in you, and the Spirit is a seal, "a guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory" ([Eph 1:14](#)).

So where do we go from here? Certainly not back to living in sin:

What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ([Rom 6:1-2](#))

Our works do not save us, but they *are* meant to be a response to our salvation. If Jesus is our Lord, then we are to live under his rule, which means doing as he has commanded us to do. We will fail, but that will not change what Jesus did on the cross, and our response should always be the same: come to Jesus, ask for forgiveness, and ask for the strength to turn away from our sin and live life for him. As [John Newton said](#), "I sin continually—but Christ has died, and for ever lives, as my Redeemer, Priest, Advocate, and King." Luther was a man with full assurance, not because of his own sinlessness, but because of Jesus. Finally, as the author of Hebrews writes:

Since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ([Heb 10:21-23](#))

Let us stand firm in our faith, with full assurance, because God is faithful.