

## Am I Saved?

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If you are asking this question, take heart, you are already pointed in the right direction. In a world that loves to wonder – “Am I fat?” “Does he love me?” “Will I ever be rich?” – it is crucial to be concerned with the most important question of all: “Am I a believer in Jesus Christ?”



If the answer to this query is so significant, how can you find out for sure? If you have heard and are currently believing the gospel of Jesus Christ, your search for assurance may still be ongoing. It may be agonizing. Many tears have been shed and loud cries to God have gone out, seemingly remaining unanswered because your doubts remain.

The book of 1 John is a short letter to a smattering of doubting congregations in Asia Minor with this stated purpose: “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.” (5:13). If you are considering your salvation, this is the book to start reading.

Salvation is an inward reality for sure, but it has measurable outward effects in our lives. Think of 1 John as a pH test strip, the kind you dip into water to discover the level of acidity or alkalinity present. All the test strip can do is reveal the makeup of the water. This book is like that, with a number of tests that aid the reader in discerning whether or not he/she really has come to know the Son of God. Let me share just five of them with you.

*Test 1:* “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (1:8). How do you view your life? Are you a sinner who needs saved or a good person who could benefit from some good moral living? The gospel tells us that our need for rescue from sin is of such magnitude that God had to become man. Jesus had to die, and John goes on to say to deny your own sinfulness is to call God a liar. Does your belief in Jesus confirm that you have sin that must be dealt with, either by your eternal punishment, or by the punishment He took upon the cross? Or do you say you believe but remain unconcerned to the point of denying your filthiness before God?

*Test 2:* “And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says, ‘I know him’ but does not keep his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him.” (1:3-4). Does your profession of faith make you a liar? Imagine proclaiming to your classmates, “I know Algebra,” and then, failing to comply with the *Order of Operations*, adding before multiplying in the equation  $3+2 \times 5$ . If your answer is 25 then you don’t know Algebra. Even if you are sincere, your

failure to follow the commands reveals that your profession to know math was wrong. In the same way, if you are not pursuing and achieving obedience to the commands of God, you are not truly believing. This does not mean that you are perfectly sinless—if you claim that you are also a liar—but it does mean that you know what God wants you to do and are purposely choosing to do it.

*Test 3:* “Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.” (2:9). Do you love other Christians, those in your family and in your church? The believer loves other believers. Do you harbor bitterness in your heart when sinned against or wronged? Those who forgive one another are the ones that God has forgiven. Maybe the very thing standing between doubt and assurance is hatred in your heart for a past or ongoing wrong. Can you let it go?

*Test 4:* “By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?” (3:16-17). It does not. Love cannot abide in a stingy heart. Jesus laid down His life for those who had mocked Him, for those who doubted, for those who abandoned him at his arrest, for those in need. Are you a giver of your time for others? How about your possessions or reputation? Are you ready to lay down your life for the Lord and for other people because of what Jesus has done on the cross? Has the love of God in Christ pierced your heart in such a way that it is now open to the idea of self-sacrifice? Be honest with yourself now, and don’t be quick to pass over these tests because you know God will forgive you. To do so is a deadly presumption. God rewards those who seek Him, not those who seek to do whatever they want and still be forgiven.

*Test 5:* “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” (5:12). Jesus is the only way. Do you have him? Do you know Him, and are you seeking to know Him more? Pluralism and well meaning people who claim that many ways to eternal life exist cannot change the facts. They do not affect God and his word. Self-help moralism cannot save you, free thinking agnosticism cannot save you, your personal opinion about God cannot save you, being kind to your neighbors and going to worship services cannot save you—only the formerly murdered and resurrected Jesus can do that.

These tests are only the beginning; there is much more. Make a plan to read this small book a few times this week, and each time ask God to grant you true assurance through His word.

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