

Titus 3

How do we know that we're a real Christian? I ask this question because there are many people around who think they're Christians, they say they're Christians, but they're not. Christ solemnly warned us of this:

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 who is in heaven. 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? Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers.’”

凡称呼我主阿，主阿的人，不能都进天国。惟独遵行我天父旨意的人，才能进去。当那日必有许多人对我说，主阿，主阿，我们不是奉你的名传道，奉你的名赶鬼，奉你的名行许多异能吗？我就明明地告诉他们说，我从来不认识你们，你们这些作恶的人，离开我去吧。

So it's very important for all of us personally to make sure that we're truly in the faith. That we're truly believing in the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation. Our eternal destiny depends upon it. But how do we know this? Can we know this for sure?

Many people say that we can't truly know this for sure in this life. All we can do is hope for the best. But that's not what the Bible says. The Bible tells us that we can know, and ought to know.

1 John 3:14

“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers.”

我们因为爱弟兄，就晓得是已经出死入生了。没有爱心的，仍住在死中。

1 John 5:13

“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life”

我将这些话写给你们信奉神儿子之名的人，要叫你们知道自己有永生。

Do we know for sure that we have eternal life? Or are we not sure, or even worse, deluding ourselves that we have it when we really don't?

2 Corinthians 13:5

“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realise that Christ Jesus is in you – unless, of course, you fail the test.”

你们总要自己省察有信心没有。也要自己试验。岂不知你们若不是可弃绝的，就有耶稣基督在你们心里吗？

We need to be continually examining ourselves. Not because we can never be sure of our salvation, or that the Lord isn't sure – of course He is. But rather in order for us to build up our own inner assurance that we're real Christians, and to be certain that we have been saved from the judgment to come.

I want to go through Titus chapter 3, from the point of view of looking for things within ourselves which can help us in our assurance. This will give us confidence to know that we're truly one of the Lord's people, and that we'll not be amongst those to whom Christ says, "*I never knew you.*"

I've got here eight things to look for that are mentioned in this chapter.

(1.) We'll no longer be rebellious creatures

1 "Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good,"

你要提醒众人，叫他们顺服作官的，掌权的，遵他的命，预备行各样的善事。

The whole of the Old Testament is a witness to the fact that naturally we're all rebellious creatures. We don't want to follow authority, we just want to go our own way all the time.

The nation of Israel in history had tremendous privileges. To them the Holy Scripture was given. Through them the prophets came. Through them the Messiah came. But they also served as an example of the rebelliousness of human nature. Moses said:

Deuteronomy 31:27

"For I know how rebellious and stiff-necked you are. If you have been rebellious against the LORD while I am still alive and with you, how much more will you rebel after I die."

因为我知道你们是悖逆的，是硬着颈项的。我今日还活着与你们同在，你们尚且悖逆耶和華，何况我死后呢？

Ezekiel 2:3

"Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against me; they and their fathers have been in revolt against me to this very day."

他对我说，人子阿，我差你往悖逆的国民以色列人那里去。他们是悖逆我的，他们和他们的列祖违背我，直到今日。

Now, I'm not singling out the Israelites for criticism here. They're just an example of us all. If God had chosen the Chinese or the English, we'd have behaved in exactly the same way.

But when we become a real Christian, we no longer have a rebellious spirit within us. Our selfish pride has been broken. We become peaceable people. Have you experienced this real change within you?

James 4:6

"God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

神阻挡骄傲的人，赐恩给谦卑的人。

James 3:17,18

"But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness."

惟独从上头来的智慧，先是清洁，后是和平，温良柔顺，满有怜悯，多结善果，没有偏见，没有假冒。并且使人和平的，是用和平所栽种的义果。

Has our rebellious spirit been removed? Particularly the rebellion that exists naturally in our heart against God Himself? Has the Lord now put a peace in our heart, which passes all understanding? If so, this is the first evidence that we truly are one of the Lord's people.

(2.) Do we produce the fruit of the Spirit?

2 "to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone."

不要毁谤，不要争竞，总要和平，向众人大显温柔。

Galatians 5:22,23

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

圣灵所结的果子，就是仁爱，喜乐，和平，忍耐，恩慈，良善，信实，温柔，节制。

The fruit of the Spirit are exactly that – things that can only be produced by the Holy Spirit. But many unbelievers can outwardly copy these things, which may give the impression that they're true Christians as well. But their actions will never come from the heart, and they'll give themselves away eventually.

Does our love, our gentleness, our kindness, our patience really come from our hearts? Only we can judge that within ourselves personally. Are we now

more self-controlled than we used to be? Are we kinder than we were? Do we love others more now than we used to? And when we express these things, do we really mean them? If we really mean them, and they're not just outward show, then they must have come from the Holy Spirit, and so we must be one of the Lord's children.

(3.) Are we new creatures in Christ?

3 "At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another."

我们从前也是无知，悖逆，受迷惑，服事各样私欲和宴乐，常存恶毒（或作阴毒）嫉妒的心，是可恨的，又是彼此相恨。

4 "But when the kindness and love of God our Saviour appeared,"

但到了神我们救主的恩慈，和他向人所施的慈爱显明的时候，

5 "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit,"

他便救了我们，并不是因我们自己所行的义，乃是照他的怜悯，借着重生的洗，和圣灵的更新。

6 "whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Saviour,"

圣灵就是神借着耶稣基督我们救主，厚厚浇灌在我们身上的。

7 "so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life."

好叫我们因他的恩得称为义，可以凭着永生的盼望成为后嗣。（或作可以凭着盼望承受永生）。

Have we been truly born-again from the heart? Was there a time in our lives in the past when we cared nothing for the things of God? When we lived for ourselves, "*enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures*"? But now we've been completely changed.

Some Christians have had a sudden "conversion experience," like Paul on the road to Damascus. Others maybe have come to the Lord over a period of time, or maybe they're unsure about exactly when they changed. But what they do know is that they have changed. They no longer live for the way of the world, but they're now living for the Lord.

When God saves us to eternal life, He puts the Holy Spirit within us, to guide us, and to help us in the right way. Notice that it's the "Holy" Spirit. Because this Spirit is "Holy," it will be like a light suddenly being switched on in our hearts. Suddenly we'll see all the dark corners of our lives that we couldn't see before. And we'll be ashamed of our old selves.

Naturally, we can't be ashamed of ourselves, we're always trying to justify ourselves. But if we've truly been changed in our hearts, we stop trying to justify ourselves, and start developing a true humility.

Are we truly ashamed of our old way of life? Do we now love and strive after the new way of life that the Lord has given us? If so, look up. The Lord has done a mighty work in our heart.

There are many people in the church who give themselves away that they're not one of the Lord's people, because they never talk about sin. They may be able to pray eloquently in a prayer meeting. They may be able to give wonderful, uplifting sermons from the pulpit. But they never talk about sin. The Holy Spirit, when He comes into our heart, helps us face up to our sin. Yes, of course, He shows us that now we're one of God's people, we're forgiven in Christ. But we do still fall into sin. And we'll continue to do so until we reach glory. But we now have a hatred of it. We're now truly sorry whenever we fall into sin, and we're given the desire to flee from it.

Do we have this experience in our heart? Do we truly hate our sin? Are we ashamed of ourselves whenever we do fall into sin? Are we truly sorry in our hearts whenever this happens? This is more evidence that we're one of the Lord's people.

(4.) Are we devoted to good works?

8 "This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone."

这话是可信的，我也愿你把这些事，切切实实的讲明，使那些已信神的人，留心作正经事业。（或作留心行善）这都是美事，并且与人有益。

By nature, we can't keep God's holy law. But when the Lord comes into our hearts and changes us from the inside, He gives us a love for His law, and a hatred of sin. Christ said:

Matthew 5:6

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."

饥渴慕义的人有福了，因为他们必得饱足。

So, if we're true Christians, we'll love righteousness and hate wickedness.

But if we do have these desires in our hearts, we'll soon begin to see that we ourselves fall far short of God's requirements. In the light of God's holy Law, we'll begin to see our own sinfulness more and more. Paul mentions this:

Romans 7:22-25

"For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and taking me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am. Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

因为按着我里面的意思。（原文作人）我是喜欢神的律。但我觉得肢体中另有个律，和我心中的律交战，把我掳去叫我附从那肢体中犯罪的律。我真是苦阿，谁能救我脱离这取死的身體呢？感谢神，靠着我们的主耶稣基督就能脱离了这样看来，我以内心顺服神的律。我肉体却顺服罪的律了。

Do we have this battle going on within us? Our old nature of sin against our new nature of righteousness? This is the normal life of the true Christian. Unbelievers don't have this. They don't have a battle going on within themselves like Paul. We should flee from sin. We should hate sin. We should love righteousness, and be striving after righteousness every day of our life.

We need to stir ourselves and devote ourselves to doing what's good, in every circumstance that the Lord brings along. There's plenty of need all around us. It's not much of a witness to the world if we spend all our time going to church meetings, but never help our disabled neighbour next door. Doing good works should involve real, practical activities in the world around us. We can tell people about Jesus, that's fine. But if that's all we do, it's useless. They're not going to see what a difference Christ actually makes in someone's life unless we show that difference in practical works.

James 2:14-17

"What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead."

我的弟兄们，若有人说，自己有信心，却没有行为，有什么益处呢？这信心能救他吗？若是弟兄，或是姐妹，赤身露体，又缺了日用的饮食，你们中间有人对他们说，平平安安地去吧，愿你们穿得暖吃得饱。却不给他们身体所需用的，这有什么益处呢？这样信心若没有行为就是死的。

Is there a desire in our hearts to care about the needs of people around us? And is there a desire to actually do something about their needs? If so, this is Christlikeness showing itself in us, and this can assure us of our salvation.

(5.) Are we contentious?

9 “But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and arguments and quarrels about the law, because these are unprofitable and useless.”

要远避无知的辩论，和家谱的空谈，以及分争，并因律法而起的争竞。因为这都是虚妄无益的。

10 “Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them.”

分门结党的人，警戒过一两次，就要弃绝他。

11 “You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful; they are self-condemned.”

因为知道这等人已经背道，犯了罪，自己明知不是，还是去作

There are many people in the church who love controversy. They love having their opinion, which they presumably believe to be the truth. And they love trying to defend it against everybody else.

Have you met such people? They seem like good Christians at first, because they're very zealous to defend their position. And indeed, maybe their position is the Biblical truth. Their activity seems like good witnessing. They know their Bibles very well. They seem like champions of the faith. But after a while, you get to see that there's no love in their hearts at all. They just love the controversy. They just love to win debates and to be seen to be right all the time. They're not interested in doing good, loving others, nurturing humility, and practical Christian living at all. They just like the feeling they get when they win a debating point. That's not a Christian attitude at all. That's the way of the world.

No matter how good anyone is at defending the truth and at knowing their Bibles, if they don't have love, they're nothing.

1 Corinthians 13:2

“If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.”

我若有先知讲道之能，也明白各样的奥秘，各样的知识。而且有全备的信，叫我能够移山，却没有爱，我就算不得什么。

So, let's examine ourselves. Do we have this contentious spirit in our heart? Of course we should be zealous for the truth. It's not wrong to want to defend the truth. But are we contentious about it? Do we love the feeling we get when we beat our opponent? Does it excite us to win an argument? Is this all our religion means to us? If that's all it is, we need to be born-again, because we've not yet received the Spirit of grace in our hearts.

(6.) Do we love the brethren? (also v.15)

12 "As soon as I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, because I have decided to winter there."

我打发亚提马，或是推基古，到你那里去的时候，你要赶紧往尼哥波立去见我。因为我已经定意在那里过冬。

13 "Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way and see that they have everything they need."

你要赶紧给律师西纳，和亚波罗送行，叫他们没有缺乏。

1 John 3:14

"We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

我们因为爱弟兄，就晓得是已经出死入生了。没有爱心的，仍住在死中。

If we're one of the Lord's people, it's the true believers that are now our real family. These are the ones we should love most of all.

Galatians 6:9,10

"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

我们行善，不可丧志。若不灰心，到了时候，就要收成。所以有了机会，就当向众人行善。向信徒一家的人更当这样。

When true believers meet, there's a real spirit of love between them. We don't have to try to work up this love, it's just there.

Psalms 133

"How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity. It is like precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down upon the collar of his robes. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows His blessing, even life for evermore."

看哪，弟兄和睦同居，是何等的善，何等的美。这好比那贵重的油，浇在亚伦的头上，流到胡须，又流到他的衣襟。又好比黑门的甘露，降在锡安山。因为在那里有耶和华所命定的福，就是永远的生命。

Do we know what true Christian fellowship really is? Are our hearts warmed every time we meet someone who truly loves the Lord like we do? Then this is another confirmation that we too are one of the Lord's people.

But we don't only just need to love the brethren. We should also ask ourselves: Do we love the unbelievers around us as well? And more than that, do we, or can we, love our enemies? Christ said:

Matthew 5:44-48

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

只是我告诉你们，要爱你们的仇敌。为那逼迫你们的祷告。这样，就可以作你们天父的儿子。因为他叫日头照好人，也照歹人，降雨给义人，也给不义的人。你们若单爱那爱你们的人。有什么赏赐呢？就是税吏不也是这样行吗？你们若单请你们弟兄的安，比人有什么长处呢？就是外邦人不也是这样行吗？所以你们要完全，象你们的天父完全一样。

The natural man can't love his enemies. It's impossible for him. But if we've had a new heart put within us, we can at least begin to truly love those who we could never have loved naturally. This is a tremendous witness to the world, when we can truly love our enemies. And if we know in ourselves that we are really doing it from the heart, here's another evidence of grace.

(7.) Do we live useful, productive lives?

14 "Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives."

并且我们的人要学习正经事业，（或作要学习行善）预备所需要的，免得无结果子。

Do we live useful, productive lives for God and for our fellow men, or are we still living for ourselves? Becoming a Christian involves a complete change of nature. All the natural man does is live for himself. What can I do now? What

gives me pleasure here? Where can I go on holiday this year? But when the Lord changes us, He puts a completely different Spirit into our hearts. No longer do we live for self. The pursuit of self, and its worldly pleasures, no longer excite us. We now no longer have a taste for these things.

Of course, the world won't understand this at all. But we know in our hearts that this is a new, right way of life given to us by the Lord.

Have we finished with living for ourselves? Yes, we still backslide and continue our old ways, to our shame. But has there been a fundamental change in our heart whereby we don't pursue our own pleasures any more, but now love the things of God and want to pursue them instead? If we no longer want to live for ourselves, but want to live a productive life instead, here is another evidence that we have become one of the Lord's people.

(8.) Do we realise that everything we have is all by grace? (also v.5, 7)

15 "Everyone with me sends you greetings. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with you all."

同我在一处的人都问你安。请代问那些因有信心爱我们的人安。愿恩惠常与你们众人同在。

Protestant Christianity quite rightly believes that we're saved by grace through faith. We must be saved by grace, because we can't save ourselves. But this is often misunderstood to mean that we can get to heaven without any good works being involved at all. That's an awful thing to think about the Lord's way of salvation. It's true that we're saved by grace, but we're only saved, and given a new heart, in order to do the good works that we couldn't do before:

Ephesians 2:8-10

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no-one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

你们得救是本乎恩，也因着信，这并不是出于自己，乃是神所赐的。也不是出于行为，免得有人自夸。我们原是他的工作，在基督耶稣里造成的，为要叫我们行善，就是神所预备叫我们行的。

There are plenty of people that *say* they believe in salvation by grace, but they're not saved at all. And it becomes obvious, because their so-called "faith" hasn't changed them. They think they'll be saved because they have the right doctrine, or because they go to the right church. They think that they can now just sit back and continue their old lives, and they'll get to heaven anyway. But we can't just sit back and do nothing. We can't carry on in our old sinful

lifestyle without any kind of change in our lives. A true, real faith would never think that we could.

It's good to realise that we're saved by grace through faith, not by works, so that no-one can boast. It's good to not want to boast any more. But it's also good that we don't take this to mean that we can just carry on as before. Our new nature won't let us do this. If we are uncomfortable carrying on as before, if we have an urgent desire to want to change and become the good person the Lord wants us to be, then here's another mark that He has truly changed us.

So, there we are. Eight "marks of grace." Do we have them, at least in some measure? Are we growing in these things? Even if they're not as clear or as great as we would want them to be.

Now, it's possible for unbelievers to outwardly copy some of these things. But they'll only ever be doing it for outward show. Their hearts would still be self-centred by nature. When we examine ourselves, we look to see if these things are growing in our hearts, in our innermost being. The only person who can do that is ourselves personally. I can't see into your heart, you can't see into mine. It's between us, as individuals, and the Lord.

If we find these things really growing in our hearts, then we can assure ourselves that the Lord is truly working in us. And we can be assured that we are on our way to glory, and will escape the judgment to come.

Philippians 1:6

"Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

我深信那在你们心里动了善工的，必成全这工，直到耶稣基督的日子。

But if we can't see any of these marks of grace in our heart; If we've spent our entire lives up until now living for ourselves; If, to be honest with ourselves, we know that all we've ever done in the past is put on an outward show to other people, then we really do need to be changed.

And we can be changed, from the inside. It is possible. Cry to God for mercy. He's the only one who can change us. But in order to be changed, we have to be completely finished with living for ourselves. The call to everybody is:

Acts 2:38,39

"Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call."

彼得说，你们各人要悔改，奉耶稣基督的名受洗，叫你们的罪得赦，就必须领受所赐的圣灵。