

## The Spiritual Companion

### **Am I Saved?**

Rev. Samuel Pike,  
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Every Christian goes through periods of doubt, discouragement, and disillusionment. What we doubt will vary: Does God exist? Was Jesus truly the Christ? Does the Holy Spirit live in me? And these inevitably lead to the question at hand: *Am I saved?* John Bunyan wrestled with that for years. He had to remind himself of the truths he believed at the beginning, as we all should (Rev 2.4-5). When we've lost our initial fire and conviction, we may confuse that with being lost altogether. It's one of Satan's greatest lies, to accuse us of being hypocrites and false image-bearers. "Did God really say...?" "Did God really promise?" "What proof is there of your salvation?" "Faith without works is dead."

In response, born of fear and doubt, we may slide towards free grace on the one end, or works on the other. The one requires no proofs, while the other is entirely dependent on them. The first is not salvation by faith alone, but salvation by feelings alone. We've convinced ourselves that our belief can be divorced from our *practice*. It cannot. The other swaps faith for works. Our faith then becomes works-dependent instead of grace dependent.

In 2011 Mike McKinley wrote a great little book titled, "Am I Really a Christian?" He lists the usual accusations made against us, often by fellow Christians. But they are also the vital issues to address when we examine ourselves. "You are not a Christian just because you say you are; or if you haven't been born again; or just because you like Jesus; or if you enjoy sin; or if you don't endure to the end; or if you don't love other people; or if you love your stuff." None of these, in themselves, will prove or disprove our faith, because we can fake each of them. We also go through seasons of adversity or complacency, when such evidences of our faith may be less visible than at other times. And yet our faith is indeed provable. We *can* have assurance of salvation. We *need* assurance to sustain us during hard times. We *can* rest in Christ, who accomplished everything necessary to save us. During the Great Awakening, Samuel Pike provided God's answer to the question, "**Am I saved?**" I pray you take what he says to heart. — WHG

#### ***Question 2. How may we know whether our faith is saving, amidst all the weaknesses and doubts that may attend it?***

It will be very proper in this place, to peruse the letter afresh, which occasioned both questions; because this query as well as the former one, are founded on and have a continued respect to it.

There is scarcely a subject in divinity, in which valuable and sound divines are apparently more disagreed, and by which Christians are more often perplexed, than this one which relates to the nature and workings of true saving faith. Yet it is undeniably a subject of the greatest importance. For the implantation of this grace, and an experience of its workings and actings, are necessary to the very existence of vital Christianity. No subject is more plainly treated, more copiously handled, or more frequently referred to in the sacred Scriptures, than this one. There is scarcely a page in any of the devotional or doctrinal parts of the Bible, where faith isn't mentioned, or some of its actings described under the words *trusting, hoping, waiting, receiving*, and the like. It is difficult to ascertain what the true reason is for this disagreement among judicious Christians. But I am greatly apt to imagine that the difference is chiefly in words. For the subject itself being of an experimental nature, and the appearances of saving faith being so very various, the language is scarcely adequate to the theme. Nothing is more difficult than to express, in proper words, the motions and workings of the mind.

The great question is this: *What is the nature of that act of the mind, by which a soul entrusts itself to Christ for all salvation?* Does it include in it an **assurance** or persuasion of a person's own interest in Christ, and the blessings of salvation? If it does, what degree of this persuasion or hope is necessary in saving faith? And if it doesn't, what does the applying act of faith consist in? For my part, I will endeavour to cast aside perplexing queries, and take the whole of what I have to say from the sacred Scriptures — mentioning and explaining the ideas that the Bible gives us of the nature and actings of saving faith; and hoping that this method will provide the clearest light, and afford the most satisfying evidence.

The subject is very copious and large, because the Scripture is so full and distinct upon it. But I will confine myself chiefly to those searching, interesting questions that are asked; and to those difficulties that are stated in the letter, on which both these cases of conscience are founded. The writer of the letter desires me to describe that faith by which the soul looks to, applies, and receives Christ alone for salvation; and to describe those thoughts or acts of the mind towards Christ, which flow from and are proper evidences of regenerating grace. He next proceeds to argue in a judicious way upon it, by observing that *principles* are known by their *effects*; and that this principle of living faith must therefore be known by its acts — by the inward frame, thoughts, and affections of the heart. And then he asks whether a soul venturing to apply to Christ for salvation, though uncertainly, is sufficient evidence of justifying faith?

I will endeavour to give a reply to all these questions, by explaining the language and ideas of Scripture on the subject. I apprehend that this is the best and safest, and likewise the clearest method. Bear with me then, while I expatiate freely upon it. And let me beg you to read with particular attention, as it is a matter that concerns the life of your souls.

We have an exact and ample description of this grace of faith in that well known passage from Heb 11.1, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." Without any learned or critical remarks on this text, we may easily observe that what faith fixes upon as its object, are things invisible or future, things hoped for, and things not seen. And thus it is distinguished from *sight*. Now it is here said, that faith is the substance of things hoped for; as it gives these things a substance or subsistence in the mind, by substantiating and making them real to the mind, and impressing them upon the heart. It is likewise the evidence of things not seen, as it applies the evidence of their reality to the mind, and makes them as evident and real to the soul as if they were visible things.

*So that the whole is this:* faith in itself is nothing else but the real impression and application of Gospel truths and Gospel promises. When a person truly believes, the Gospel is written in and upon the heart, engraved upon the spirit of the mind, so as to become the principle of a person's actions and affections. Carnal and worldly persons are acted upon and influenced by worldly and carnal principles; but believers, as such, are acted upon and influenced by Gospel principles. And those Gospel principles are chiefly such as these: that Christ is a most necessary, most suitable, most free, and an all-sufficient and the only Saviour. If a person has these truths not only imprinted on his imagination, but written on his heart, and applied to his own case and conscience, he is then possessed of saving faith.

But a person cannot clearly know that these truths are savingly impressed and applied, except by the motions and actings of his mind in consequence of it. For let a person have ever so clear a knowledge of the truth, ever so firm a belief of it, ever so great a value for it, or have his affections ever so much moved by it — yet if his soul is not excited to those *actings* which are suited to the truth that is believed, then he has no proof of his being possessed of this saving principle.

You may ask then, what are those actings of the heart which are suited to and produced by the saving impression of such Gospel truths? I will answer in Scripture language. If anyone truly believes — for himself, his own necessity, and the fulness and freeness of Christ as a Saviour — then he is induced by that to fly to him, trust in him, lean on him, lay hold of him, go to him, take shelter under him, and to make him his refuge, his portion, his hope, and his salvation. Here lies the centre of the whole evidence — not in the degree of a person's knowledge, nor in the degree of his persuasion concerning his own personal interest.

You may proceed to ask, What is this *coming to Christ, receiving him, leaning on him, taking shelter under him*, and the like? I answer that all these phrases, though varied in words, are the same in their sense when applied to the workings of the mind; and so they illustrate and confirm each other. So that, whichever of these I fix on, it is much the same; it would be too tedious to run through them all distinctly. All of them are figurative expressions, taking a natural and common idea and applying it to the spiritual motions and actings of the soul. And therefore they are all to be understood in a *spiritual* sense. I will choose one of these various phrases, and explain it with a particular view to *doubts* on the one hand, and *assurance* on the other.

What I will fix upon at present is the act of flying to a refuge, or taking shelter under a covert. Christ is the true city of refuge; and in believing, souls are represented as *fleeing for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us*, Heb 6.18. Christ is *a covert from the tempest*, Isa 32.2, and by faith believers take shelter under it. Let me now illustrate and diversify this similitude in a familiar way.

Let us suppose a person in the field sees a terrible storm coming, which he wants to be sheltered from. The sight of it makes his heart tremble with a peculiar awe and fear. Let us likewise suppose he is informed of or sees a safe refuge, shelter, or covert at hand. Now let this person be ever so well persuaded of the safety of this shelter, and his being welcome to it. If he doesn't actually take sanctuary under it, he is still exposed to the violence of the storm, whatever his motive or reason may be for not flying to it. Perhaps he is indifferent about it, not apprehending that the storm is very dangerous; or he may think to weather it himself without a shelter; or he may have a dislike for the shelter itself; or he may think that some other shelter may be sufficient for him. In any of these cases, he still neglects to fly to it. And so he must take the consequences, even though he may see the storm, and believe that the proposed refuge is free and safe. This is an exact representation of the case of the sinner who begins to be concerned about his soul. He has learned and believes, in a sense, that Christ Jesus is a free and sufficient shelter. But either through his indifference about Christ, or through a dislike of him, or through an opinion of his own sufficiency, he still keeps away from Christ as the true Saviour. And so he stands exposed to the storm of God's wrath, notwithstanding all his knowledge of, and opinions about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us next put the case in a different point of view; and suppose a person sees a storm coming, and is greatly terrified by the apprehensions and appearance of it. But he knows very little about the shelter that is near at hand. He has heard something of it — enough to make him wish he was under it, and to be persuaded he would be safer there than anywhere else. But he may question whether he will be admitted into it, or whether he has any right to fly to it; and many other such doubts and fears may possess him. Yet he is driven by mere necessity; he sees no other relief; and on the whole, he has a glimmering *hope* that he may possibly be admitted, while he is *certain* to be destroyed otherwise. Therefore, in this trembling way he actually takes himself to it, and so he is safe — whether in the act of flying to it, he apprehends this or not. For his actual safety is not hindered by the fears of his soul; nor would it be promoted by any notional assurance of it. But the whole of his security depends on the safety of the refuge itself, on his admittance into it, on

his resorting to it, and in taking sanctuary under it. This is an exact representation of the frame and condition of a poor soul who knows but little of Christ, fears much through the weakness of his faith, and yet he ventures through all objections, to cast himself upon the Lord Jesus for all his salvation. I will leave it to your own thoughts to apply the similitude more distinctly.

I will now proceed to collect from this, the real workings of the believer's heart in the act of believing in, or running to Christ for spiritual safety. Casting aside the natural simile and outward act of flying, we are now to attend to the works of the soul — both when faith is very strong and clear, and when it is very dark and feeble. If faith acts in a very vigorous, lively, and comfortable manner, then the language of the heart is to this purpose:

“I feel my misery is exceedingly great, I see my state is itself exceedingly dangerous and helpless; I know and see that there is no help in myself; I cannot atone for one sin, I cannot root out one corruption. I cannot perform one duty myself. Nor can I secure myself from that vengeance that is due to me, or prevent my being miserable forever. But, O my soul, do not therefore despond. I have heard of a glorious, all-sufficient Saviour; one who is able to save to the very uttermost, having made a perfect atonement, and wrought perfect righteousness for poor, miserable, guilty wretches such as I. The truth of God and the oath of God assure me that this salvation is altogether free; that the most unworthy, guilty, and polluted souls are welcome to Jesus, coming to him for pardon and purification; that I myself, notwithstanding all my sin and misery, am not excluded from this hope and salvation.

I will therefore, without hesitation or fear, repair directly to this Saviour, thankfully accept his whole salvation, being fully persuaded that *the one who comes to him, he will by no means cast out*. I believe his promise. I will go and plead his own word, and lay a bold, but humble claim to all the salvation I need. Nothing will hinder me from this confidence in him. But I will go and call him my Saviour and my God, my portion and my salvation — knowing that he will not disappoint my hope, deny my claim, or rebuke my confidence; even though I am in myself so utterly unworthy and polluted.”

The soul having reasoned itself into this glorious hope by faith in free grace, immediately repairs to Christ, pleads the promises, claims Christ and all his salvation, and finds rest in him. Oh, what satisfaction and consolation, what joy and triumph the soul now experiences! This is the joy and pleasure of faith, founded not upon any past evidences; but upon the entire fulness and freeness of Christ. Now this satisfaction in Christ produces a hearty love for him, delight in him, and a desire to honour and serve him forever. It makes the soul abandon all self-righteousness as worth nothing; and to hate every false and sinful way as dishonourable and abominable to that Jesus whom it loves with a superlative affection.

But if faith acts in a very weak, feeble, and uncomfortable manner, then the heart speaks to this purpose:

“O my soul, what a miserable condition you are in! Surely I am a lost creature; I am ruined; I have ruined *myself*; my sins cry aloud for vengeance, and my heart is above measure, beyond conception, polluted and abominable. I cannot help myself; all the creation cannot help me; my sins have gone over my head like a heavy burden that is too heavy for me to bear. And oh, what *shall* I, what *can* I do? Where will I fly to for shelter from the wrath due to me? How will I get this sinful heart of mine cleansed, and fit to appear before God? O I am lost, utterly undone in myself. But is there no help, no *hope*? I have heard indeed, that there is an all-sufficient and gracious Saviour provided. But I greatly fear whether he will pity and save me. I cannot believe

that I will ever be welcome to him. I cannot think that he can ever pardon such a vile sinner, or cleanse such a polluted heart as mine. I cannot apprehend that such infinite favours that I must either have or perish, will ever be granted to one so ill-deserving and hell-deserving as I am. Surely I can never be someone for whom he shed his precious blood; and therefore I can expect no welcome at his throne, no admittance into his love.

“But my necessities press hard upon me! If I stay in this condition, my damnation is certain. It is possible, however, that there may be some hope. If I go to him, and venture to lay myself at his feet, it cannot make my condition worse. I will therefore go and confess my sins, and see if there is any mercy for me. But what will I say? I tremble to think of appearing before him, whose name I have dishonoured, whose blood I have trifled with, whose mercies I have abused, and whose calls and invitations I have slighted. However, I will go, *and if I perish, I perish.*”

Upon this, the poor desponding soul ventures to the throne of grace, pours out its complaint, confesses its guilt, mentions something in a trembling manner of the free grace of Christ; and perhaps is in such a fright, under such tremor and dread, that it doesn't know where it is, or what it is doing — little thinking that it is now acting faith upon Christ. Well, having thus come, the soul receives just encouragement enough to go again and again. And from this time forward, it loves and prizes a throne of grace. It is watchful against everything that may grieve the Spirit, and offend the Saviour. It seeks to no other refuge, but looks this way alone, and receives such a view of Christ as to make Him lovely and desirable. Though darkness and doubts may still possess the mind, yet it will heartily cling to Christ, desiring to be found in him, and be made more and more like him.

A person who approaches Christ, and acts in this trembling way, obtains the same safety, even though he doesn't possess the same comfort and assurance as the former. For our safety doesn't depend on our assurance, as I said before, but on the welcome which Christ gives to the coming sinner. Though we don't believe with such assured faith, Christ abides faithful; he cannot deny himself. Oh what encouragement is here for the weak faith of such trembling souls, to show them what hope they may entertain, and what free promises they may plead!

There are various degrees between these two opposite cases which I just represented; and there is a vast variety of experience. For the same soul who at one time comes with trembling, may at another time receive further hope, then sink back again into the same discouragement as before. While a person who has at first fled to Christ with much assurance, may have his faith assaulted and staggered afterwards. In other persons, there is a great mixture of hope and fear, of joy and distress, by turns. But *in general* there is a gradual increase of hope and love; for *the path of the just is like the shining light that shines more and more unto the perfect day*, Pro 4.18.

Let me once more observe that there is a great variety, not only as to the strength or weakness of faith, but likewise as to means and ordinances, in and by which faith works. For with some, these actings of faith are exercised in a way of serious *meditation*; while others cast themselves upon Christ by *prayer*; and not a few have these workings drawn forth in *reading or hearing* the sacred oracles. And those who observe the motions of their souls will find that, in either of these ways, the soul actually, seriously, and cordially entrusts itself to Christ, and casts itself upon him.

Thus I have endeavoured to describe in a plain and familiar way, chiefly under one figure — that of flying to a refuge — the special actings of saving faith. I might in the same manner run through and expatiate upon the other representations of it, such as coming, leaning, receiving, and the like. But this is unnecessary, because it would still be found the same thing, the same sort of act under all of them. For it is coming to a free fulness, leaning upon a free prop, receiving a free gift,

as well as running to a free shelter. And under them all, there is really an appropriating possession of Christ, and an application of Him to the soul, with greater or lesser degrees of hope and comfort, founded upon the free welcome that the Gospel gives to a coming sinner.

But after all that has been said, it must be confessed that sometimes the very act of faith is so weak or confused, that by reflecting on these transactions between Christ and his soul, a person cannot arrive at a clear persuasion whether he has believed or not. It might therefore be proper to say something more on this topic, to give all the light I can in this matter. Sometimes, indeed, faith acts in such a powerful and perspicuous manner, that it evidences *itself* — the Spirit witnesses with our spirits that we are the children of God. And then a person can no more doubt his interest in Christ, or of the truth of his faith, than he can deny or overlook the clearest and strongest motions of his own soul. In this case, the soul can at once say, *My Lord and my God*; it can directly appropriate a saving promise, taste the sweetness of it, and apply the blessings to itself.

Besides this, it may appear that there is a deceit even in the soul's own assurance of faith. It may be only a flighty passion, a fond imagination, or a dangerous delusion. It is therefore highly necessary that this persuasion itself should be examined, and tested against sacred Scripture. While on the contrary, those who don't have any clear assurance at all, may be proved to be true believers from the divine word. There may be such fears mixed with our hope, such unbelief with our faith, or the act of faith may be so weak in itself, that it is impossible from these experiences themselves, to prove our interest. Yes, we may be so dark in our minds, or so very jealous of our own hearts, as to make us afraid to draw the happy conclusion in our favour. And what must we do in these cases? Surely we may and should resort to marks and signs, according to the apostle's direction in 2Cor 13.5: "Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith." At the same time, he insinuates the most substantial evidence for it: *namely*, Christ is in us unless we are reprobates. And if we pay any regard to the present experiences of believers, we will often find that a soul has fled to Christ at first in the dark. He doesn't receive any clear consolation, till afterwards the fruits of faith in the heart and life have been revealed. And this revelation by the word and Spirit of God has been the first introduction of a comfortable and settled hope.

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Therefore, I will now endeavour to put you and myself into a proper and clear way to know whether our faith is saving, amidst all the weakness and doubts that may attend it, by producing a few satisfactory marks and evidences. May the Lord enable all who peruse these lines, and who are in doubt, to put these proposed questions to themselves! There is a great variety of marks and signs of this grace laid down in the word of God, and judiciously opened and applied by divines — such as an aversion to sin, the Spirit of prayer, conquest over the world, and the like. These are all good and solid marks if rightly understood. But the only thing that can determine whether our hatred of sin, or contempt of the world, or love for God, etc., flows from faith and evidences it, is an inquiry into the principles and motives of these experiences. I will therefore aim to ask the questions as closely as I can, to search into the very springs of our conduct.

I must take it for granted that everyone who has true faith, sees that (1) he himself is vile; (2) the Gospel is precious; (3) sin is hateful; (4) holiness is desirable; (5) Christ is honourable; and (6) God's children are amiable. Whoever cannot set his seal to these things, is no true Christian. For if a person is proud of himself, slights the Gospel, mocks sin, isn't concerned about being conscientious in his duty, despises Christ, or dislikes the people of God as such, then he can have no apparent pretensions to this holy and spiritual grace. But this is still not enough for us to apprehend that we have the above marks, because there is a sort of humility, hatred of sin, love

for Christ and holiness, that doesn't flow from faith. And there may be an appearance of all these things from *legal* principles. Therefore, under each of these headings I must ask two questions: Whether it is so with you, and why is it so?

1. *Are you vile and base in your own sight?* I apprehend that this is mentioned as a characteristic of a true saint in Psalm 15.4. We read it thus: "In whose eyes a vile person is contemned." I rather choose to render it, "Who is vile and despised in his own eyes." Every true Christian is this way before God, because he sees so much of the meanness and corruption of his nature, and of the majesty and purity of God. But it is to be seen that some persons may answer this character, who have been under a merely *legal* work, not knowing anything *experimentally* of faith in Christ.

I must therefore ask further, *What is it that makes you appear low and contemptible in your own eyes?* You may see enough of yourself, your sin, and your misery, to discourage you and drive you to despair; and yet you have a legal pride at the bottom of all this seeming humility. And this may keep you from Christ by making you unwilling to go to him till you can purify yourselves to prepare yourselves for him. But if your humility is promoted by and founded upon a view of the freeness of grace in Jesus Christ, so you see that if you are saved, it must be by free, powerful, preventing grace. And the sight of grace as absolutely free, melts your soul, subdues your pride, and shames your unbelief. This is a good mark that you have seen Christ, and believed in him. But if you are humbled and ashamed, not only because you have broken the law, but likewise because you have been so unbelieving of the grace of the gospel — because you haven't trusted in Christ more, haven't loved him more, nor sought him with more eagerness and delight. I say, if such things as these make you low, vile, and abominable in your own sight, then it is a happy evidence that you've had something of the Gospel engraved on your heart.

2. *Is the Gospel precious to you?* This is another thing that is universally true of all believers. As newborn babes, they desire the sincere milk of the word so that they may grow thereby, 1Pet 2.2. But it is certain that some may be fond of the Gospel, zealous for its doctrines, and plead its cause, without ever having felt its saving power upon their hearts.

Ask yourselves another question therefore: *Why is it that the Gospel is precious to you?* What are its peculiar doctrines that you are most acquainted with, and why do you lay such a stress on them? For instance, the atonement of Christ, the imputation of his righteousness, and the divinity of his person. Can you not bear to part with these truths, because you see and feel that all your salvation, all your desire, and all your hope are contained in them? Can you say for yourself that if these doctrines are *uncertain*, then all your comfort and expectation is removed, and the very foundations of your faith are destroyed? If your value for these truths arises from an inward conviction that you must be lost without them, and from such a regard for the honour of Christ that you cannot bear to have him so degraded and dethroned — then this is a blessed sign that your regard for the Gospel *flows from*, and *evidences* a saving belief of it.

3. *Is sin hateful to you?* This is another particular, without which a person cannot be supposed to be a true believer. But for this to be a proper proof of true faith in the heart, it's necessary that you further inquire, *Why do you hate it?* If you detest it merely because it endangers your reputation; or distresses your conscience; or hurts your constitution; or merely because it renders you liable to everlasting misery — the strongest detestation of any iniquity on *these* grounds, will not prove the truth of faith in your heart. But if you hate sin because Christ died for it; if you see the sinfulness of it as it appears on the cross of Christ; if you can look at a suffering Jesus, and mourn for *your* sins as what pierced the Saviour; if you cannot bear to indulge it in any of its appearances, because it would be the highest ingratitude to Christ who loved us so as to give himself for us —

then such grounds as these for hating sin, will evidence that a person has believed in Christ, and had some true taste of his love.

4. *Is holiness desirable to you?* Or, is it your desire and endeavour to walk blameless in all the statutes and ordinances of the Lord? This is a necessary ingredient in true Christianity; for it is a scripture maxim, that *without holiness, no one will see the Lord*. Whoever has no real love for, nor desire for holiness, in vain pretends to have true faith.

But for this to be an evidence of true faith, you must further inquire, *Why do you love it?* Perhaps you would be glad to be regular and obedient in order to promote your temporal interest, or to advance your good name, or perhaps to recommend yourself to God by your own righteousness. Such byproducts, or selfish and self-righteous views being at the bottom of your obedience and endeavours, they will spoil all, and prove instead that you are destitute of true faith. But if your regard for, and aim at holiness, arises from a love for Christ, a desire to serve and glorify him; if it is a sense of his love, and a view of his loveliness, that quickens and constrains you to it — then this is a blessed evidence that your faith is saving, however dark or doubting your frame may be.

5. *Is Christ Jesus honourable in your esteem?* We are expressly told that he is precious to those who believe, 1Pet 2.7. Believers have a real value for him, love for him, and estimation of him. But in order to know whether this value for Christ is of the right kind, and is evidential of saving faith, it is necessary to ask, *On what accounts is Christ precious to you?* Is it merely because he is able and willing to save you from the wrath to come? Or, is it because he saves you from sin, as well as from wrath? Do you value Christ because he is an effectual Saviour, and an absolutely free Saviour, and a holy Saviour? Perhaps you'd like him to assist you to save yourself; but you don't like him to do it effectually by his own efficacious grace. Or maybe you would like to be interested in his redemption, but you would rather receive it on the condition that it's performed by you, than as a free gift. Or you might like him to save you from the *desert* of sin, while you would rather have him spare *sin* itself. A regard for Christ and his salvation in any of these ways, is no evidence of saving faith. But if you esteem, honour, and value Christ because he saves freely and effectually, and that is both from the guilt and power of sin, then this will prove that your faith is saving.

6. *Lastly, Are the children of God amiable to you?* This is another necessary characteristic of a true believer. "For we know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren," 1Joh 3.14. But let us beware of a deceit here. You may love the children of God because some of them are perhaps, your particular friends, or your relations, or because they've been kind to you, or because their natural temper and valuable qualifications make their conversation agreeable to you. Such things as these may draw forth a strong affection towards them, while you yourself may be a stranger to the grace of God. Ask yourself, therefore, *Why do you love them?* If it is because they bear the image of Christ, because they are holy, serious, spiritual, heavenly, and zealous for Christ, and if you love them more, you'll see more of these things in them, whatever they may be in other respects, this is a proof that the same principle of faith and love is in *you*, that is in *them*.

By asking such questions as these, a person may, under the influence of the divine Spirit, arrive at this important knowledge of whether he has saving faith or not. Though perhaps you cannot recollect the particular actings of your mind towards Christ, nor observe the special workings of faith in your soul, yet if you can say that you are low in your own eyes, that the Gospel is precious to you, sin is hateful, holiness is desirable, Christ is honourable, and God's children are amiable, and you can find that the reasons and grounds of this temper of spirit are of an evangelical nature, then you may humbly and safely conclude that this divine principle is wrought in your souls.



Let me now conclude the whole with a suitable improvement by way of information, consolation, humiliation, and direction.

1. *For information.* From all this, learn that a person may safely make use of marks and signs to know whether he has truly believed or not. I make this plain remark on account of one paragraph in the epistle which occasioned this discourse. The writer expresses himself as concerned to know whether his hope is too much like the hope of a Pharisee; too much built upon those acts of the mind that arise from a legal principle — such as his humility, striving against sin, and endeavours for a religious frame of mind. That is, he asks whether a hope based upon such evidence is merely legal, and tends to make him trust in his duties and frames. To this I answer that to raise our hopes upon those experiences that *are*, or *may be* of a legal kind, is indeed very dangerous. But we must not carry this thought so far as to deny or depreciate the use of marks and signs for fear of trusting in them. It is indeed very difficult to take encouragement and hope from marks and evidences, without relying upon them or putting them in the place of Christ. But there are two things that will prevent us from doing this.

One is to look upon nothing as a true evidence of faith, that doesn't have an evangelical principle at the bottom of it. If we take our encouragement from our humbling sense of sin, from our strivings against it, and from our endeavours after holiness, without inquiring what it is that *makes* us humble, penitent, and diligent, then we are in danger of being deluded by false evidence, and of placing our confidence upon it, rather than upon Christ. But if we are concerned to look into the motives and principles of our humility, repentance, and diligence, and to see that a regard to Christ in all his offices is the ground of them, then our evidence is true; and we are not in such danger of falling into a legal frame because now, nothing but *Christ in us is our hope of glory*.

The other thing that is necessary to prevent us from trusting in frames, evidences, and duties, is to make use of the hope that we have obtained from them, to further encourage us to trust in Christ, and live upon him. Having obtained some good hope through grace, of an interest in Christ, by reflecting on our past experience, we are now to say in our hearts, “Has Christ revealed himself to me so freely, graciously, and powerfully? Let me then go to him with an enlarged confidence for all those supplies of grace, strength, and comfort that I lack, being encouraged in this by the experience I've had of his free grace and almighty power.” If we therefore raise our hope from such *evangelical* marks, and improve it to further reliance upon Christ, then we are not guilty of trusting in frames or duties.

2. *For consolation.* Happy, thrice happy, is the one who is endowed with this special grace, the mother, if I may say, of all the rest. For the word of God solemnly declares that he who believes is justified, will be sanctified, and shall be eternally saved; that he has an interest in all spiritual blessings, in all the sure mercies of David. Whoever has this divine principle of saving faith is safe, whether he knows it or not; yes, the least degree of it is saving, whatever doubts or weaknesses may attend it. Let me assure you, believers, that you need not be discouraged because of your many darknesses, fears, enemies, or temptations; for you will come off more than conquerors, through him on whom your faith rests. You may be apt to perplex your minds, and sink your spirits, because your faith is so weak; or because you cannot distinctly recollect its actings in your experience; or you haven't had those deep, awful convictions of sin, or those lively joys and comforts that others can relate. But don't distress yourselves for lack of these feelings. If you can conscientiously answer the foregoing questions, your state is safe, though you fall short of many others in knowledge, comfort, and lively experiences. Therefore, comfort yourselves with these

words, remembering that Christ *will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, but will bring forth judgment unto victory.* (Isa 42.3)

3. *For humiliation.* Can we prove the truth of our faith only by the motives and grounds of our humility, devotion, or diligence? How many of the experiences and duties of believers themselves are defective in this respect! How many byproducts, selfish views, and carnal motives lie at the foundation of most of our performances! Surely we have every reason to lament the weakness of our faith and its absence from many of the services we engage in. Let us humble ourselves before God, confessing that our repentance, resolutions, hopes, comforts, obedience, and all our duties, are no longer evangelical, having so little of faith under them and in them.

4. *For direction.* Though we may make use of marks and signs to test the truth of our faith, let us take care not to live upon these evidences, but to live by faith in Christ. You've had an extensive description of the direct acts of faith in this answer. And let me assure you that the best way to clear up your evidences, to strengthen your graces, and to promote the life of religion, is to be found frequently acting upon Christ in this way, flying to him, and taking sanctuary in him. Are you in darkness? Go to him for light. Are you in doubt through unbelief? Go to him for satisfaction and consolation. Are you weak and feeble? Go to him for strength.

Let every complaint drive you to Him. Make use of every ordinance to direct you to him. Improve every comfort and hope to attract you to him, and to encourage your confidence in him. In this way, by frequent returning to Christ, you'll find not only your faith cleared and strengthened, but likewise true grace, true holiness, and true consolation advancing in your soul, till faith is swallowed up in sight, and hope in enjoyment.