

How do you know if you're a Christian or not? If it's by faith in Jesus Christ, that I become a Christian, well how do I know I've got **enough** faith? Or am I believing in the right things. If I have to repent of my sins to be forgiven, well, how do I know if I've repented of all my sins? Or have I missed stuff???? How do I know I'm saved? How do I know I'm a Christian?

*I mean:*

- *I know my car's registered, because it's got a rego sticker.*
- *I know my battery's charged, because the volt meter says so.*
- *I know the cake's cooked, because when I pull the wire out, it's not gooey any more.*
- *I know the meat's cooked when there's no more pink in it... (some of you lot eat your meat half raw)*

There's lots of measuring sticks, but where's the measuring stick for being a Christian? Where's the proof? Where's the assurance??? How do I know that I'm a Christian? How can I go through life, with an assurance, that I am actually good with God???

God has told us to look forward to spiritual, heavenly blessings, ... But what guarantee is there, that there are any? And what guarantee do **I** have, that they're going to be part of **my** future??? How do we know that we're not just being led down the garden path, and there's nothing at the end of it????

Being baptised doesn't make you a Christian (lots of people are baptised – some as infants – some as adults, and yet many of them do not know God at all). Going to church doesn't mean you're a Christian any more than going to McDonalds makes you a hamburger. Being confirmed doesn't make you a Christian... Putting a lot of money in the offering box doesn't make you a Christian. How do I know that I'm a Christian? And how can **you** know that you're a Christian?..

*There's nothing quite like a good clearing sale, is there men? (Our wives mightn't enjoy them quite so much). My Dad, well he always loved a good clearing sale, and when he went to a clearing sale, he was always prepared. And when we got there, me & my brother would always go and check out the motor-bikes and the utes,,, but you know what? I don't think Dad ever put in a bid on any of that sort of stuff (much to our bitter disappointment)...*

*My dad, well he'd bid on what **we** saw as piles of junk....*

*Now of course that I'm a bit older, I actually understand why. He used to buy buckets of hydraulic fittings, or boxes and boxes of pipe fittings, and bundles of scrap steel & nuts & Bolts & Washers & screws, and*

*he'd only ever pay a few dollars for it. And now, I understand that one pipe fitting or one hydraulic fitting, in a shop, would cost more than the whole bucket load that he'd bought. (and saved trips to town)*

*Anyway, I started telling you how he was prepared. He used to carry in his pocket, a Nikko pen, and a wad of labels with strings on them... And as soon as a bundle of (very precious) "junk" was knocked down to my Dad, out would come one of these tags, he'd write on it "Jim Brumpton", and he'd securely tie it on to something in the junk heap. That way, nothing got left behind.*

*Later in the day, he'd send us boys down the rows (past all the motorbikes – there'd be no "Brumpton" labels on them) and we'd see the piles of junk with my dad's mark on them, and we'd gather them up – nothing would be left behind. They'd go into the trailer, to begin the journey to their new home (our shed – and you can imagine what it looked like)...*

*When Dad bought something, he put his mark on it – tied it to it securely – that's mine...*

*That was my Dad's version of a seal. It was his name – that's mine.*

Christians, are sealed by God, and that takes the guess work out of whether you're a Christian or not. And I'll tell you a bit more about that, shortly.

We're picking up from Ephesians 1:11. For those who were here last week, you'll probably remember that Paul's just overflowing with praise for God. And he praises God for His marvellous plan of salvation. Before the world was even created, God knew who He was going to choose, to enter into His eternal plan of salvation. And that is a wonderful blessing – predestination – God chose you, even before the creation of the world, to be adopted as His child.

And now we're into v11. <sup>11</sup> In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, (alright, so God decides, and God works to God's glorious plan) verse <sup>12</sup> so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

Now, who is that? Who's Paul referring to, when he says "we who were the first to hope in Christ..."

Well luckily, we don't have to guess. We can just turn to where Paul tells us – we can turn to one of His other letters – the letter to the Romans. Romans 1:<sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the

power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

You see, when Christ came, He came **first**, for God's chosen people. Israel are God's chosen people. And Christ came, first and foremost, for **them**. Christ came to redeem Israel. (for His praise and glory).

But He didn't **only** come for Israel. If it were only Jews who were to be saved, well we might as well pack up shop now and go home, because there's not too many Jews around here... The Gospel, is the power of God for salvation to **everyone** who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

In Old Testament times, you didn't have to be born a Jew, to become a Jew. People could convert to Judaism, and God would accept them... And there was a sign – there was a mark – to know that you were a Jew. There was a mark on your body – Males had to be circumcised. And there was a mark in your society – you had to observe the Sabbath rest....

Alright, so Christ came, not only for the Jews, but also for the gentiles – people like us. Israel, are God's chosen people (not 'were' – 'are'), only now, we **also** are being welcomed into His family. And this time, we

don't have to be marked by circumcision, or by the observation of the Sabbath.

When we become a Christian, we are marked with a much more important mark – we are marked with a much more spiritual mark. It is a mark that cannot be faked, and it leaves us with absolutely no doubt that we are indeed, one of God's children.

Reading from V13:

**<sup>13</sup> In him you also** (alright, he's talking now, to non-Jews – that's us), **when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,** <sup>14</sup> who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

*When my dad bought his junk, he put his tag on it – his seal, saying "that's mine", and it was guaranteed, he was coming back to pick it up.*

When you became a Christian, God sealed you, with His Holy Spirit. – now what does that mean?

Well firstly, let's see Paul's definition here of a Christian (he doesn't use the word 'Christian' here, by the way, that's a word I'm throwing in), but when does

one become a Christian? Well, let me tell you what it's not. Becoming a Christian:

- Is not being born in a 'so-called' Christian country
- It's not even being born to Christian parents
- It's not being baptised as a baby
- Nor is it being baptised as an adult
- Becoming a Christian is not the act of trusting in Jesus Christ for earthly blessings
- Becoming a Christian is not being healed in the name of Jesus
- Nor is it living a life of doing good deeds...

When does Paul say we are marked – sealed with the Holy Spirit?

when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and **believed** in him

“Truth” is a very important word, in the Bible. There are lots of **false** gospels out there:

- Come to Jesus and everything will go well for you
- Come to Jesus and He'll heal your marriage
- Come to Jesus and He'll fix all your financial problems
- God loves you just as you are, He made you just as you are, and so you should celebrate yourself just as you are – you don't need to change

All of these are **false** gospels, and there's lots of them out there. But false gospels, will not save us. What does it take to be saved? **the word of truth, the**

**gospel of your salvation.** We have to be saved – there is something we need to be saved from, and that is our sin. Christ came to save us from our sin. We repent of our sin, and trust in Him for our salvation ..... And when we get to Chapter 2 (next week), Justin's going to be sharing more of that with you then...

But hearing the word of truth – **hearing** the good news of salvation, is only part of it. There's something that **we** have to do as well... and that is to believe.... – not just to believe **about** salvation – not just to believe **about** Jesus, but to believe **in** Jesus....

Do you know the difference????

*I used to do a bit of abseiling and rock-climbing. And I've got some pretty high quality ropes in my shed. And you can put your harness on, have the ropes tied to a couple of strong anchor-points up the top of a cliff, thread the rope through the figure-8, and you can believe about those ropes – you can believe that they're strong enough, that they're secure enough, to hold you, and you can stay up the top and enjoy the view... – But that is not believing **in** them...*

*Believing in them, is when you back off the cliff. Believing in them, is dangling from those ropes, with the rocky ground 40 metres below... – that's believing in the ropes.*

And you can know all about Jesus, but until you stop trying to hang on to everything else - Your own works; your own strivings; your own hopes; your own dreams; everybody else's expectations... Until you trust **in** Christ, and let go of everything else, and believe in Him – you're just believing about Him – you're not believing in Him. Even the devil believes about Jesus... And he shudders..

And when you believe the truth about Christ – the truth about salvation – and believe **in** Christ, God says “That's it – you're mine”... And at that point – when you become a Christian, God seals you with His Holy Spirit.

Take note of **when** this happens. A lot of people ask me, “When do I receive the Holy Spirit?” Well, there's your answer – it's when you heard the truth about salvation, believed the truth, and believed (put your trust) **in** Christ... When you **become** a Christian, you receive the Holy Spirit.

That's not the end of it – there's also something called “being filled with the Spirit” – “Baptised with the Spirit”<sup>i</sup>... It's when the Holy Spirit comes upon you in a powerful new way, to empower you, in life and in service to God... And sometimes that Power, just comes. Sometimes at salvation. Sometimes at Baptism. Sometimes when other Christians lay their hands on

you, and pray for the power of the Holy Spirit to fill your life....

But the initial seal of the Holy Spirit, is when you trust in Christ... The Holy Spirit moves in, and sets up house in your life, and begins His transformational work, at that point....

We'd better keep going...

Having the Holy Spirit in your life, is the guarantee that you're a Christian – He is (and I say “He”, because Holy Spirit is not an “it” – the Holy Spirit is God Himself living inside of you), and He is the guarantee that you **will** inherit eternal life – He is the guarantee of the future spiritual blessings... God lives, only where it is holy (right?). Therefore, if God is living in you, you **are** one of His holy ones – you **are** one of His saints (because God's not going to make His home in you if He hasn't made you holy).

Alright, well that's very good and nice, but how do I know that the Holy Spirit is in me? We've gone from asking “How do I know I'm a Christian?” – Well, you're a Christian if the Holy Spirit is in you, but that's just shifted the question: “How do I know if the Holy Spirit is in me?” What's the test????

Well, I'll tell you what the test is not. Some denominations will tell you that the test is if you can speak in tongues or not. That is **not** the test. Spiritual gifts are **never** the test, because they can be faked – they can be counterfeit.... And the Bible is very clear – “We do not all have the same spiritual gifts.”

The test is very simple: Where the Spirit is, there you will find the fruit of the Spirit - *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,*  
<sup>23</sup> *gentleness, self-control.*

And if these attributes, are increasing in your life, well that is direct evidence that the Holy Spirit has set up home... We rarely find a complete and sudden transformation, but we should always find, a continuing, ongoing transformation... And it's in his letter to the Galatians, that Paul talks about the fruit of the Spirit ... but let's come back to Ephesians – what does he tell us here?

Paul had heard two things about the Ephesians, that had convinced him that they were sealed with the Holy Spirit: Firstly, their faith was recognisable – it wasn't hidden – he'd heard about their faith – even from prison, he'd heard about it... And the other thing he'd heard about, was their love for other Christians... And that is very important evidence. If the Holy Spirit is in

you, your faith will be recognisable – it won't be hidden, and you will love other Christians.

And when Paul heard these things about the Ephesians, it moved him to do two things: It moved him to thank God for them, and then to pray for them to have an even **greater** experience of the Holy Spirit.

He prayed that the Holy Spirit would give them Wisdom. He prayed that God would reveal himself to them in **new** ways, so that they would know God even better... There's a lesson for us here – don't ever be content that you've arrived. He knew they were Christians – he recognised the Holy Spirit inside of them, but Paul was never content with that – Paul longed for the Ephesians to know God even better.

He prayed that God would reveal Himself – not just to their minds – but to their hearts, so they would know in their heart, the wonderful inheritance that He has prepared for His saints, and that they would know the immense power of God...

That's a pastor's prayer, if there ever was one...

Do you know what gives me my the greatest joy? It's when I see the Holy Spirit, at work in you lot. You mightn't recognise it in yourself, but sometimes I

glimpse something in the people of this church, and it's something that only God can do, and my heart just leaps with joy....

Sometimes I see the fruit of the Spirit, beginning to show in new ways. Sometimes I see God breaking down walls, and building up spirits. Sometimes I see a measure of faith in someone that I've never seen in them before – just evidence that the Holy Spirit is doing His work in them...

And so I give thanks to God for that, but I also pray that God would give you a deeper experience of His Spirit. I pray that you will know God, better and better. I pray that each one of you will just **crave** to know God better, and that you'll study His word, and pray, and experience The Lord in everyday life. (And please, I hope you're praying that for me too)

But I also pray that you will know and experience the **Power** of God in your life.

Christ is all powerful. He is above every ruler and authority. And Christ has been given to the church as its head – we are His body, He is the head. The power of Christ, works out through His body...

And my prayer, is that the Holy Spirit will fill you (not just with his knowledge) but with His power, so we, as

His saints together, will not be weak in our service, that we will not be weak in our love, that we will not be weak in our faith, that we will not be weak in sharing our faith, that we will not be weak in preaching the gospel, but that we will be strong – that we will be effective, for the building of His kingdom in this place....

Lord open the eyes of our hearts, that we would know you better, and fill us with your Spirit – fill us with your power, for your purposes, and for your glory, with Christ as the head...

Amen.

Questions:

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<sup>i</sup> Acts 19:1–7 (ESV)

### **Paul in Ephesus**

**19** And it happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the inland country and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples. <sup>2</sup> And he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” And they said, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.” <sup>3</sup> And he said, “Into what then were you baptized?” They said, “Into John’s baptism.” <sup>4</sup> And Paul said, “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is, Jesus.” <sup>5</sup> On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup> And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking in tongues and prophesying. <sup>7</sup> There were about twelve men in all.

Acts 8:14–17 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup> Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, <sup>15</sup> who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, <sup>16</sup> for he had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>17</sup> Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.