



NEW LIFE

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"For the Word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev 1:9)

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How to Know if You are a Real Christian (Part 1)

Originally titled True Grace Distinguished from the Experience of Devils by Jonathan Edwards, 1752. This modern language version is Copyright 1994 by William Carson. Permission is granted for reproduction, so long as this file is not altered, this notice is included in any reproduction, and it is not sold for profit

"You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-and shudder." James 2:19

How do you know if you belong to God? We see in these words what some people depend on as an evidence of their acceptance with God. Some people think that they are all right before God if they are not as bad as some evil person. Other people point to their family history or church membership to show that God approves of them. There is an evangelism programme in common use that asks people certain questions. One of the questions is, "Suppose you were to die today. Why should God let you into his heaven?" A very common response is, "I believe in God." Apparently the apostle James knew people who said the same thing: I know I am in God's favour, because I know these religious doctrines.

Of course James admits that this knowledge is good. Not only is it good, but it is also necessary. Nobody can be a Christian who doesn't believe in God; and more than that, the One True God. This is particularly true for those who had the great advantage of actually knowing the apostle, someone who could tell them of his first-hand experience with Jesus, the Son of God. Imagine the great sin of a person, who knew James, and then refused to believe in God! Certainly this would make their damnation greater. Of course, all Christians know that this belief in the One God is only the start of good things because "anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." (Heb. 11:6.)

However, James is clear that although this belief a good thing, it is definitely not proof that a person is saved. What he means is this: "You say you are a Christian and you are in God's favour. You think God will let you into heaven, and the proof of it is, you believe in God. But that is no evidence at all, because the demons also believe, and they are sure to be punished in hell." The demons believe in God, you can be sure of that! They not only believe that He exists, but they believe that God is a holy God, a sin-hating God, a God of truth, who has promised judgments, and who will carry out his vengeance upon them. This is the reason the demons "shudder" or tremble- they know God more clearly than most human beings do, and they are afraid. Nevertheless, nothing in the mind of man, that devils may experience as well, is any sure sign of God's grace in our hearts.

This reasoning may be easily turned around. Suppose demons could have, or find within themselves, something of God's saving grace-proof they would go to heaven. This would prove James wrong. But how absurd! The Bible makes it clear that demons have no hope of salvation, and their believing in God does not take away their future punishment. Therefore believing in God is not proof of salvation for demons, and it is safe to say, not for people, either.

Knowledge of God alone is no proof of salvation.

This is seen even more clearly when we think about what demons are like. They are unholy: anything that they experience, cannot be a holy experience. The devil is perfectly wicked.

"You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44) "He who does what is sinful is...

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of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning." (1 John 3:8) Therefore the demons are called evil spirits, unclean spirits, powers of darkness, and so on. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." (Eph 6:12)

So it is plain that anything in the minds of demons cannot be holy, or lead to true holiness by itself. The demons clearly know many things about God and religion, but they do not have a holy knowledge. The things they know in their minds may make impressions in their hearts- indeed we do see that the demons have very strong feelings about God; so strong, in fact, that they "shudder." But they are not holy feelings because they have nothing to do with the work of the Holy Spirit. If this is true of the experience of demons, it is also true of the experience of men.

Notice this, that it does not matter how genuine, sincere, and powerful these thoughts and feelings are. Demons, being spiritual creatures, know God in a way that men on earth cannot. Their knowledge of God's existence is more concrete than any man's knowledge could be. Because they are locked in battle with the forces of good, they have a sincerity of knowledge as well. On one occasion Jesus cast out some demons. "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?" (Mat 8:29) What could possibly be a more clear-cut experience than this? However, while their thoughts and feelings are genuine and powerful, they are not holy.

Also we can see that the holy objects of their thoughts don't make their thoughts and feelings holy. The demons know God exists! Matthew 8:29 shows they know more about Jesus than many people do! They are thoroughly that Jesus will judge them some day, because He is holy. But it is clear that genuine, sincere, and powerful thoughts and feelings about holy, spiritual things, is no proof of God's grace in the heart. Demons have these things, and look forward to eternal punishment in hell. If men have no more than what the demons have, they will suffer in the same way.

Religious experiences are no proof of salvation.

Some people have strong religious experiences, and think of them as proof of God's working in their hearts. Often these experiences give people a sense of the importance of the spiritual world, and the reality of divine things. However, these, too, are no sure proof of salvation. Demons and damned human beings have many spiritual experiences which have a great effect on their heart attitudes. They live in the spiritual world and see first-hand what it is like. Their sufferings show them the worth of salvation and the worth of a human soul in the most powerful way imaginable. The parable in Luke chapter 16 teaches this clearly, as the suffering man asks that Lazarus might be sent to tell his brothers to avoid this place of torment. No doubt people in hell now have a distinct idea of the vastness of eternity, and of the shortness of life. They are completely convinced that all the things of this life are unimportant when compared to the experiences of the eternal world. People now in hell have a great sense of the preciousness of time, and of the wonderful opportunities people have, who have the privilege of hearing the Gospel. They are completely aware of the foolishness of their sin, of neglecting opportunities, and ignoring the warnings of God. When sinners find out by personal experience the final result of their sin there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt 13:42) So even the most powerful religious experiences are not a sure sign of God's grace in the heart.

Demons and damned people also have a strong sense of God's majesty and power. God's power is most clearly displayed in his execution of divine vengeance upon his enemies. "What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath-prepared for destruction?" (Rom 9:22) Shuddering, the devils await their final punishment, under the strongest sense of God's majesty. They feel it now, of course, but in the future it will show to the greatest degree, when the Lord Jesus "is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels." (2 Thess 2:7) On that day, they will desire to run away, to be hidden from the presence of God. "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him." (Rev 1:7) So everyone will see him in the glory of his Father. But, obviously, not all who see him will be saved.

Objection #1- People are different from demons.

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Objection #2- People can have religious feelings that demons cannot.

Now it is possible that some people might object to all this, saying that ungodly men in this world are quite different from demons. They are under different circumstances and are different kind of beings. An objector might say, "Those things that are visible and present to demons are invisible and future to men. Besides, people have the disadvantage of having bodies, which restrain the soul, and keep people from seeing these spiritual things first-hand. Therefore, even if demons do have a great knowledge and personal experience of the things of God, and have no grace, the conclusion does not apply to me." Or, put another way: if people have these things in this life, it may very well be a sure sign of God's grace in their hearts.

In reply, it is agreed that no man in this life has ever had the degree of these things as the demons have them. No person has ever shuddered, with the same amount of fear that the demons shudder with. No man, in this life, can ever have the same kind of knowledge that the Devil has. It is clear that demons and damned men understand the vastness of eternity, and the importance of the other world, more than any living person, and so they crave salvation all the more.

But we can see that men in this world can have experiences of the same kind as those of demons and damned people. They have the same mental outlook, the same opinions and emotions, and the same kind of impressions on the mind and heart. Notice, that for the apostle James it is a convincing argument. He claims that if people think believing in one God is proof of God's grace, it is not proof, because demons believe the same. James is not referring to the act of believing only, but also to the emotions and actions that go along with their belief. Shuddering is an example of emotions from the heart. This shows that if people have the same kind of mental outlook, and respond from the heart in the same way, it is no sure sign of grace.

The Bible does not state how much people in this world may see God's glory, and not have God's grace in their hearts. We are not told exactly to what degree God reveals himself to certain people, and how much they will respond in their hearts. It is very tempting to say that if a person has a certain amount of religious experience, or a certain amount of truth, they must be saved. Perhaps it is even possible for some unsaved people to have greater experiences than some of those who have grace in their hearts! So it is wrong to look at experience or knowledge in terms of amount. Men who have a genuine work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts have experiences and knowledge of a different kind. – *to be concluded next week.*

WELCOME TO NEW LIFE B-P CHURCH LONDON

Our worship services begin promptly at **11.00 am and 4.00 pm.**

Please stay back for Bible Study and fellowship lunch after the morning worship and for tea after the evening service. Do invite your friends to come to Church.

Worship Services			WELCOME
Morning	<i>Today: 22/11/2009</i>	<i>Next Week: 29/11/2009</i>	We extend a warm welcome to all worshippers this Lord's Day. We like to welcome Matthew Tan to our worship service last Lord's Day
<i>Chairman:</i>	John Poh	Joey Seow	
<i>Preacher:</i>	Eld George Chew	Eld George Chew	
<i>Message:</i>	The One and Only Name	What is Unclean?	
<i>Text:</i>	Acts 4:8-12	Acts 10:1-48	NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS
<i>Organist:</i>	Joy	Anthony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church Resident Minister: Continue to pray for Pastor and Mrs Ki's preparation to return to London in December. Pray that their shipment will arrive safely. • Bible Study: Today, we will cover Lesson 27 (Genesis 35&36). Please spend the upcoming week preparing for DHW Lesson 28 (Genesis 37). • Pray for those who are sick: - Constance (ankle), Douglas (knee pain), Barbara (Alzheimer's), Prema (thyroid & skin condition), Eld Jack Ford (old age and knees), Margaret (asthma), Mrs Ki's father (lung cancer), Eld Chew (recovery from shoulder injury), Mrs Ki (recovery from back pain), Grace/Brian (cold) • Pray for those who are away or on travel: Pastor Ki (S'pore/M'sia/South Korea), Mrs Ki (Australia), Nicolas (Belgium), Anthony & Helen (Hong Kong) • Pray for those seeking employment/new opportunities: Joy, Brian, Yetta • Pray for those who have upcoming exams: Grace, Josh and Brian • The Church would like to extend her condolences to Yetta and her family on the home-going of her mother (Susan) who went to be with the Lord on Saturday morning. Pray for their peace and comfort in this time of bereavement.
Evening			
<i>Chairman:</i>	John Poh	Joey Seow	
<i>Preacher:</i>	Eld George Chew	Eld George Chew	
<i>Message:</i>	The Purpose of Prayer	The Lord's Prayer	
<i>Text:</i>	1 Timothy 2:1-8	Luke 11:1-13	
<i>Pianist:</i>	Sophia	Grace	
Other Duties			
	<i>Today: 22/11/2009</i>	<i>Next Week: 29/11/2009</i>	
<i>Ushers:</i>	Joey / Evelyn	Jonathan / Joy	
<i>Lunch:</i>	Joshua		
<i>Washing-up:</i>	Volunteers	Volunteers	
<i>PA Crew:</i>	Joshua	Lee Wei	
<i>Bible Study:</i>	Lesson 27 (Gen 35&36)	Lesson 28 (Gen 37)	
Appointments of the Week			
Fri 27 Nov	7:00pm	Young Adults Fellowship: SGAT meeting	
Sat 28 Nov	4:00pm	Prayer Meeting & Bible Study: No Prayer Meeting	
Worship Service Collections			
Offering:	£382.20	Lunch: £33.40	
		Hospitality: £207.00	
<u>Beautiful Living</u>			
<i>Adapted from "In Green Pastures" by J.R. Miller, D.D.</i>			
<p>We do not know, when we are working for immortality, by what act or word of ours we shall be remembered. It may be the obscurest thing of our life that shall shine in the most radiant glory. Let us, then, seek to make everything we do beautiful enough to be our epitaph. If our hearts are always full of love, our lives will be full of gentle deeds that will please God and bless the world. Then we shall write our names where no floods of years, no abrasion of events, no wasting tooth of decay, no hungry waves of time, eating away the bank whereon we stand, can ever destroy the record. To neglect the least duty may be to spoil our own immortality. One opportunity missed may be the marring of our whole life.</p>			