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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 2)

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*

True Spiritual experiences have a different source.

At this point, someone might answer these thoughts by saying, "I agree with you. I see that believing in God, seeing His majesty and holiness, and knowing that Jesus died for sinners is not proof of grace in my heart. I agree that demons can know these things as well. But I have some things they don't have. I have joy, peace, and love. Demons can't have them, so that must show that I am saved."

Yes, it is true that you have something more than a demon can have, but it is nothing better than a demon could have. A person's experience of love, joy, etc., may not be because they have any cause in them different from a demon, but just different circumstances. The causes, or origins, of their feelings are the same. This is why these experiences are no better than those of demons. To explain further:

All the things that were discussed before about demons and damned people, arise from two main causes, natural understanding and self-love. When they think about themselves, these two things are what determine their feelings and response. Natural understanding shows them that God is holy, while they are wicked. God is infinite, but they are limited. God is powerful, and they are weak. Self-love gives them a sense of the importance of religion, the eternal world, and a longing after salvation. When these two causes work together, demons and damned men become aware of the awesome majesty of God, whom they know will be their Judge. They know that God's judgment will be perfect and their punishment will be forever. Therefore, these two causes together with their senses will bring about their anguish on that judgment day, when they see the outward glory of Christ and His saints.

The reason many people feel joy, peace, and love today, while demons do not, may be more due to their circumstances, rather than any difference in their hearts. The causes in their hearts are the same. For example, the Holy Spirit is now at work in the world keeping all of mankind from being as wicked as they could be (2 Thess 2:17). This is in contrast to demons, who are just as wicked as they can be all the time. Furthermore, God in his mercy gives gifts to all people, such as the rain for crops (Matt 5:45), heat from the sun, etc. Not only that, but often people receive many things in life to bring them happiness, such as personal relationships, pleasures, music, good health, and so on. Most important of...

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all, many people have heard news of hope: God has sent a Saviour, Jesus Christ, who died to save sinners. In these circumstances, the natural understanding of people can cause them to feel things that demons never can.

Self-love is a powerful force in the hearts of men, strong enough without grace to cause people to love those who love them, "But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them." (Luke 6:32) It is a natural thing for a person who sees God being merciful, and who knows that they are not as bad as they could be, to therefore be sure of God's love for them. If your love for God comes only from your feelings that God loves you, or because you have heard that Christ died for you, or something similar, the source of your love to God is only self-love. This reigns in the hearts of demons as well.

Imagine the situation of the demons. They know they are unrestrained in their wickedness. They know God is their enemy and always will be. Although they are without any hope, still they are active and fighting. Just think, what if they had some of the hope that people have? What if demons, with their knowledge of God, had their wickedness restrained? Imagine if a demon, after all his fears about God's judgment, was suddenly led to imagine that God might be his Friend? That God might forgive him and let him, sin and all, into heaven? Oh the joy, the wonder, the gratitude we would see! Would not this demon be a great lover of God, since, after all everybody loves people who help them? What else could cause feelings so powerful and sincere? Is it any wonder, that so many people are deceived this way? Especially since people have the demons to promote this delusion. They have been promoting it now for many centuries, and alas they are very good at it.

A true spiritual experience transforms the heart.

Now we come to the question, if all these various experiences and feelings come from nothing more than demons are capable of, what are the kinds of experiences that are truly spiritual and holy? What do I have to find in my own heart, as a sure sign of God's grace there? What are the differences that show them to be from the Holy Spirit?

This is the answer: those feelings and experiences which are good signs of God's grace in the heart differ from the experience of demons in their source and in their results.

Their source is the sense of the overwhelming holy beauty and loveliness of the things of God. When a person grasps in his mind, or better yet, when he feels his own heart held captive by the attractiveness of the Divine, this is an unmistakable sign of God's working.

The demons and damned in hell do not now, and never will experience even the tiniest bit of this. Before their fall, the demons did have this sense of God. But in their fall, they lost it, the only thing they could lose of their knowledge of God. We have seen how the demons have very clear ideas about how powerful God is, his justice, holiness, and so on. They know a lot of facts about God. But now they haven't a clue about what God is like. They cannot know what God is like any more than a blind man can know about colors! Demons can have a strong sense God's awesome majesty, but they don't see his loveliness. They have observed His work among the human race for these thousands of years, indeed with the closest attention; but they never see a glimmer of His beauty. No matter how much they know about God (and we have seen that they know very much indeed) the knowledge they have will never bring them to this higher, spiritual knowing what God is like. On the contrary, the more they know about God, the more they hate Him. The beauty of...

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God consists primarily in this holiness, or moral excellence, and this is what they hate the most. It is because God is holy that the demons hate Him. One could suppose that if God were to be less holy, the demons would hate Him less. No doubt demons would hate any holy Being, no matter what He was like otherwise. But surely they hate this Being all the more, for being infinitely holy, infinitely wise, and infinitely powerful!

Wicked people, including those alive today, will on the day of judgment see all there is to see of Jesus Christ, except His beauty and loveliness. There is not one thing about Christ that we can think of, that will not be set before them in the strongest light on that brilliant day. The wicked will see Jesus "coming in clouds with great power and glory." (Mark 13:26) They will see his outward glory, which is far, far greater than we can possibly imagine now. You know the wicked will be thoroughly convinced of all who Christ is. They will be convinced about His omniscience, as they see all their sins replayed and evaluated. They will know first-hand Christ's justice, as their sentences are announced. His authority will be made utterly convincing when every knee will bow, and every tongue confess Jesus as Lord. (Phil 2:10,11) The divine majesty will be impressed upon them in quite an effective way, as the wicked are poured into hell itself, and enter into their final state of suffering and death (Rev 20:14,15) When that happens, all their knowledge of God, as true and as powerful as it may be, will be worth nothing, and less than nothing, because they will not see Christ's beauty.

Therefore, it is this seeing the loveliness of Christ that makes the difference between the saving grace of the Holy Spirit, and the experiences of demons. This sight or sense is what makes true Christian experience different from everything else. The faith of God's elect people is based on this. When a person sees the excellence of the gospel, he senses the beauty and loveliness of the divine scheme of salvation. His mind is convinced that it is of God, and he believes it with all his heart. As the apostle Paul says in 2 Cor 4:34, "even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." That is to say, as was explained before, unbelievers can see that there is a gospel, and understand the facts about it, but they do not see its light. The light of the gospel is the glory of Christ, his holiness and beauty. Right after this we read, 2 Cor 4:6 "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." Clearly, it is this divine light, shining into our hearts, that enables us to see the beauty of the gospel and have a saving belief in Christ. This supernatural light shows us the superlative beauty and loveliness of Jesus, and convinces us of His sufficiency as our Saviour. Only such a glorious, majestic Saviour can be our Mediator, standing between guilty, hell-deserving sinners such as ourselves, and an infinitely holy God. This supernatural light gives us a sense of Christ that convinces us in a way nothing else ever could.

Genuine spiritual experiences have different results.

When a most wicked sinner is caused to see Christ's divine loveliness, he no longer speculates why God should be interested in him, to save him. Before, he could not understand how the blood of Christ could pay the penalty for sins. But now he can see the preciousness of Christ's blood, and how it is worthy to be accepted as the ransom for the worst of sins. Now the soul can recognize that he is accepted by God, not because of...

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who he is, but because of the value God puts on the blood, obedience, and intercession of Christ. Seeing this value and worth gives the poor guilty soul rest which cannot be found in any sermon or booklet.

When a person comes to see the proper foundation of faith and trust with his own eyes, this is saving faith. "For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life." (John 6:40) "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me." (John 17:6-8)

It is this sight of the divine beauty of Christ that captivates the wills and draws the hearts of men. A sight of the outward greatness of God in His glory may overwhelm men, and be more than they can endure. This will be seen on the day of judgment, when the wicked will be brought before God. They will be overwhelmed, yes, but the hostility of the heart will remain in full strength and the opposition of the will continue. But on the other hand, a single ray of the moral and spiritual glory of God and of the supreme loveliness of Christ shone into the heart overcomes all hostility. The soul is inclined to love God as if by an omnipotent power, so that now not only the understanding, but the whole being receives and embraces the loving Saviour.

This sense of the beauty of Christ is the beginning of true saving faith in the life of a true convert. This is quite different from any vague feeling that Christ loves him or died for him. These sort of fuzzy feelings can cause a sort of love and joy, because the person feels a gratitude for escaping the punishment of their sin. In actual fact, these feelings are based on self-love, and not on a love for Christ at all. It is a sad thing that so many people are deluded by this false faith. On the other hand, a glimpse of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ causes in the heart a supreme genuine love for God. This is because the divine light shows the excellent loveliness of God's nature. A love based on this is far, far above anything coming from self-love, which demons can have as well as men. The true love of God which comes from this sight of His beauty causes a spiritual and holy joy in the soul; a joy in God, and exulting in Him. There is no rejoicing in ourselves, but rather in God alone.

The sight of Christ's beauty- God's greatest gift!

The sight of the beauty of divine things will cause true desires after the things of God. These desires are different from the longings of demons, which happen because the demons know their doom awaits them, and they wish it could somehow be otherwise. The desires that come from this sight of Christ's beauty are natural free desires, like a baby desiring milk. Because these desires are so different from their counterfeits, they help to distinguish genuine experiences of God's grace from the false.

False spiritual experiences have a tendency to cause pride, which is the devil's special sin. "He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil." (1 Tim 3:6) Pride is the inevitable result of false spiritual experiences, even though they are often covered with a disguise of great humility. False experience is enamored with self and grows on self. It lives by showing itself in one way or another. A person can have great love for God, and be proud of the greatness of his...

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love. He can be very humble, and very proud indeed of his humility. But the emotions and experiences that come from God's grace are exactly opposite. God's true working in the heart causes humility. They do not cause any kind of showiness or self-exaltation. That sense of the awesome, holy, glorious beauty of Christ kills pride and humbles the soul. The light of God's loveliness, and that alone, shows the soul its own ugliness. When a person really grasps this, he inevitably begins a process of making God bigger and bigger, and himself smaller and smaller.

Another result of God's grace working in the heart is that the person will hate every evil and respond to God with a holy heart and life. False experiences may cause a certain amount of zeal, and even a great deal of what is commonly called religion. However it is not a zeal for good works. Their religion is not a service of God, but rather a service of self. This is how the apostle James puts it himself in this very context, "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-and shudder. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?" (James 2:19-20) In other words, deeds, or good works, are evidence of a genuine experience of God's grace in the heart. "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1 John 2:34) When the heart has been ravished by the beauty of Christ, how else can it respond?

How excellent is that inner goodness and true religion that comes from this sight of the beauty of Christ! Here you have the most wonderful experiences of saints and angels in heaven. Here you have the best experience of Jesus Christ Himself. Even though we are mere creatures, it is a sort of participation in God's own beauty. "Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature." (2 Pet 1:4) "God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness." (Heb 12:10) Because of the power of this divine working, there is a mutual indwelling of God and His people. "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:16)

This special relationship has to make the person involved as happy and as blessed as any creature in existence. This is a special gift of God, which he gives only to his special favorites. Gold, silver, diamonds, and earthly kingdoms are given by God to people who the Bible calls dogs and pigs. But this great gift of beholding Christ's beauty, is the special blessing of God to His dearest children. Flesh and blood cannot give this gift: only God can bestow it. This was the special gift which Christ died to obtain for his elect. It is the highest token of his everlasting love, the best fruit of his labours, and the most precious purchase of his blood.

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	Today: 29/11/2009	Next Week: 06/12/2009	We extend a warm welcome to all worshippers this Lord's Day. We like to welcome Samuel Annah to our worship service last Lord's Day
<i>Chairman:</i>	Jonathan Kim	John Poh	
<i>Preacher:</i>	Eld George Chew	Eld Stephen Toms	
<i>Message:</i>	A Vision that Changed the world	The Man Who Spoke God's Word	
<i>Text:</i>	Acts 10:1-48	1 Kings 13:1	
<i>Organist:</i>	Joy	Anthony	
Evening			NEWS/ANNOUNCEMENTS
<i>Chairman:</i>	Jonathan Kim	John Poh	<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: There will be no DHW class today. Please spend the upcoming week preparing for DHW Lesson 27 (Genesis 35&36). • 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), John (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), Yetta (S. Africa), Joey & family (S'pore). • Pray for those seeking employment/new opportunities: Joy, Yetta • Pray for those who have upcoming exams: Grace, and Josh • The Church would like to extend her condolences to Joey & family on the home-going of Joey's grandmother. Pray for peace and comfort to the Seows in this time of bereavement. • The Christmas edition of the Evangelical Times is available at the back hall for purchase / reading.
<i>Preacher:</i>	Eld George Chew	Eld Stephen Toms	
<i>Message:</i>	The Lord's Prayer	The King Who Obeyed God's Word	
<i>Text:</i>	Luke 11:1-13	2 Kings 23:25	
<i>Pianist:</i>	Grace	Sophia	
Other Duties			
	Today: 29/11/2009	Next Week: 06/12/2009	
<i>Ushers:</i>	Daniel / Sharon	Jonathan / Constance	
<i>Lunch:</i>	Maureen	TBC	
<i>Washing-up:</i>	Volunteers	Volunteers	
<i>PA Crew:</i>	Lee Wei	Brian	
<i>Bible Study:</i>	N/A	Lesson 27 (Gen 35&36)	
Appointments of the Week			
Fri 04 Dec	7:30pm	Young Adults Fellowship: Old Testament Messages	
Sat 05 Dec	4:00pm	Prayer Meeting & Bible Study: Led by Jonathan	
Worship Service Collections			
Offering: £483.80		Lunch: £48.00	
<h2 style="margin: 0;"><u>The Blessing of a Book</u></h2>			
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Adapted from "In Green Pastures" by J.R. Miller, D.D.</i></p> <p>Books are not altogether impersonal things. Somebody wrote them. Somebody's lifeblood is in them. Somebody lived, suffered, wept, struggled, and toiled to put into the book that which pleases and helps us. Should we not think of this as we read the sentences which delight us or which inspire and quicken us? Do we often, indeed, give thought to the writer whose written words bring to us their messages? Do we not forget oftentimes that it is somebody's heart-blood which runs in the sentences we are reading, somebody's very life, if the words are truly helpful? Do we then owe nothing to the author? Be sure the lessons he is teaching have cost him pain and tears. He had to live deeply to write helpfully. Some recognition of the help we have gotten from him we certainly owe to him. Should we not write to him our thanks for the gift he has put into our life?</p>			