

You Can Be Sure You're Truly A Christian

Dr. Paul B. Phair, with some illustrations & insights from Bill Hybels

Four spiritual categories of people

I am mindful that there are four categories of people. You are in one of these four as it relates to your destiny of heaven or hell:

1. Those who are truly Christians & are sure they are

Absolutely confident & why

You are absolutely confident that you don't deserve to go to heaven. Your life has not measured up to God's holy standards. But... you have personally and genuinely trusted in Jesus Christ to forgive you of all your sins, past, present and future. Therefore, you are confident that whenever that time comes for you to die that you are going to heaven. No doubts, no qualms.

Wonderful feeling

Those of you who are in that category, its a wonderful feeling isn't it? To know without a shadow of doubt that because you have trusted in Jesus that you have passed from spiritual death into spiritual life.

Close encounter with death

You can possibly recall a time or two when you've had a close encounter with death -- or as in my case, a time when you thought you had a close encounter with death. And while you were greatly relieved to have survived -- in the midst of the experience there was a quiet and calm assurance that you would have gone immediately into heaven.

2. Those who are truly Christians & are not sure they are

Measure of faith, but...

Others of you, like the first group also know that you don't deserve to go to heaven. And you too have placed a measure of faith in Jesus as the one who died for your sins. You have sincerely confessed your sin to God and asked him to forgive you based on what Jesus has done for you -- but for some reason or other, you are still quite unsettled about your eternal destiny. You can't say with confidence that you are going to heaven.

Legitimate ticket, but afraid

You are much like a person who has a legitimate airplane ticket, but you are afraid that the plane is going to leave without you. There is no basis for your fear but its there anyway.ⁱ

I feel for you

I feel for you -- this is a very uncomfortable situation to be in; in fact its down right anguishing when you stop to think about it. You live with constant guilt, uncertain of God's love for you. But I have great news for you --

God doesn't want you to remain in doubt

God doesn't want you to have a shadow of doubt; He wants you to be in that first category.

Earthly parent -- Heavenly parent

If you are a parent, do you want your children to live in a state of uncertainty about your love for them, do you want them to always wonder if you will leave them in your will so that you can motivate your children in fear to love you and care for you? Of course not, not if you are a reasonably emotionally healthy parent. Well your heavenly Father doesn't want you to be in doubt either.

Paraphrasing the words of Jesus, "if you being a flawed human parent want your children to have confidence of your love for them, how much more does your perfectly heavenly father desire this for you?"ⁱⁱ

1 John

Did you realize that one of the key reasons that one of the books of the Bible, 1 John, was written was so that true believers in Jesus Christ could have certainty about their destiny?

1 John 5:13 (NLT) I have written this to you **who believe** in the name of the Son of God, so that you may **know** you have eternal life.

You can *know* you have eternal life; not *hope* or *wish*, or *I'd like to think*, but you can **know** – you can have confidence!

3. Those who know they aren't Christians, but are seeking

Reason you may have come today

Some of you may be here this morning because your parents forced you to come, a friend of yours dragged you along, or maybe someone you're dating urged you to come -- and you came because you are attracted to them, and you also know that maybe this could somehow fill a need you have in your life.

Well, I can relate to that ... I'm glad you're here and so are the people here at Oakwood.

More importantly, God is. **He** is seeking after **You**.

Phair at a Christian group

When I was a young man, an attractive woman in whom I was interested, invited me to attend one of her Christian group meeting. I went because I wanted to learn more about God – *and* because I wanted to get to know her better! It was there that I heard for the first time, a person say that they had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I desired to have that too, so following the meeting I said to the group leader: “I’m not a Christian, but do you mind if I come here, I’m searching...” He welcomed me, and then communicated to me how I could know Christ personally too. I’d been seeking God for a couple of years, and I knew then that I was about to find Him! Which I did. God drew me to Himself, and used others to guide me.

4. Those who think they are truly Christians, but are not.

Majority of Americans

This last category is another one that has me really concerned. Perhaps the majority of moderately decent American people, especially church going people who fall into this category. It is those who think they are Christians, but in actuality are not.

Jesus indicates surprise on judgment day

Jesus Himself makes it clear in Matthew 7, ⁱⁱⁱ that there will be many on the day of judgment who will be devastated. They thought they would be going to heaven, but heaven’s doors were shut to them and they were cast into hell for all eternity and they pound on heaven’s closed doors saying “*Open up please, I thought you would let me in because of such and such reasons* ... but Jesus to the people in this last category

Matthew 7:23 (NIV) ... I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

Matthew 7:13-14 (NLT) ¹³“You can enter God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. ¹⁴But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.

Bogus Ticket

People in this category can be compared to people sitting out at the waiting gate at Tampa International Airport. Every one in the gate areas sees the plane outside through the glass, they are planning on getting on the plane in just a few moments but one person sitting there holding a ticket just like the others, but he doesn’t know that when he bought his ticket online from *El Cheapo* travel service that it was a bogus ticket.

He shouldn’t have done business with that discount bogus site because they sold him a counterfeit ticket, which he’s holding in his hand just like everyone else who is holding their legitimate ticket in their hands. And everyone in that waiting area is planning to board that plane in just about ten minutes.

They all have a similar amount of confidence but one person with a bogus ticket has false assurance. And in about ten minutes when he walks through the line and up to the gatekeeper, he's going to find out that he has got big trouble, no legitimate ticket, and no admittance.

People here today holding counterfeit ticket

No doubt, there are people here at this church who come regularly or off and on who think they are Christians. They are even sure about it but they shouldn't be because their assurance is based on false premises. They are holding a counterfeit ticket.

My desire

Those are the four categories:

1. Those who are truly Christians & are sure they are
I desire to add to the assurance of those of you who are in category #1
2. Those who are truly Christians & are not sure they are
Others of you, I want you to be better informed and have your faith clarified and strengthened so that you can leave this place with confidence in God's love and forgiveness for you.
3. Those who know they aren't Christians, but are seeking
4. Those who think they are truly Christians, but are not.
It is my goal to strip away the false assurances that many of you are clinging to. I hope that you will discover today that you aren't really a Christian so that you can truly become one.

I'd like to help take a look at the ticket you are holding from some el cheapo travel agency who distributed to you a bogus ticket before you get in line and you discover you can't board the plane. I want to show you how you can trade it in and get the real thing.

Importance of issue

This issue is of incredible importance. You may wish to put it off -- but one day it will be upon you. It will. 100 years from now, not a single person here in this auditorium will be here. And according to Jesus, we will either be heaven or hell. Which is it going to be for you?

You can leave here this day, with absolute assurance that you are a true Christian and that you are headed for heaven.

Leading False Assurances (in ascending order)

Introduction

I would like to identify for you five leading false assurances that people cling to when people claim to be a Christian and they really aren't. Four leading counterfeit tickets that people hold in waiting rooms unaware that they are counterfeit.

Some of you are going to realize that you are holding a bad ticket, but we can take care of that at the end of this message.

#5. Mere temporal faith

Some people think they are Christians because they occasionally pray to God for particular requests related to issues of this life.

- Health
- Finances
- Safety
- When your life is in a mess

God invites His true children to pray to Him about such issues of life and He is pleased when we do -- but some people falsely assume that because they pray to Him occasionally about such items and they have been answered that they are Christians.

Saving faith?

But the issue as it relates to heaven or hell is, *do you have **saving** faith?* -- not just **temporal** faith. Have you personally trusted Jesus Christ as your forgiver, rescuer (savior) from sin? *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved (Acts 16:31).*

#4. Trust in mere mental assent

Only a person of history

Some people believe in Jesus Christ just like they do George Washington or Napoleon. That Jesus is a real man in history (which all historians affirm), that He died on the cross, and rose from the dead -- but they are not trusting in Jesus to do anything for them now.

James 2:19

Mere assent to who Jesus is, does not make you a Christian. James says with tongue in cheek,

James 2:19 (NLT) You say you have faith, for you believe that there is one God. Good for you! Even the demons believe this, and they tremble in terror.

The demons believe in God all right – even correct understandings as to who God truly is and yet they do not trust, love, or obey God, and thus their belief causes them to tremble -- how about your belief in God?

Giving mental assent to Jesus Christ is not enough, you must personally trust Him as your Forgiver and give Him allegiance as your Supreme Leader. It is one thing to believe in various truths about Jesus, and an entirely different matter to trust in Jesus. Faith that rescues us, is not merely believing facts about Jesus Christ, but believing in Jesus Christ; it is trusting Him to save your soul for all eternity.

Paul expressed this truth to Timothy when he wrote: **2 Timothy 1:12 (NLT)** ...I know the one in whom I trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until the day of his return.

#3. Trust in religious practices

Church attendance

You are not a Christian because you attend church services occasionally or even every week. You can attend every Sunday for the rest of your life, you can even take notes! and end up with a bogus ticket because its not your church attendance that makes you a Christian.

Attendance at a Tampa Bay Buccaneers football game will not make world-class athletes of anyone.

Religious ceremonies

Trusting in some religious ceremony that another person did for you or you yourself did. Baptism is a wonderful symbol, but it is only that, a symbol – signifying, and it is a means of professing our faith to others that we have trusted in Jesus and with his help intend to follow him.^{iv}

While religious ceremonies and practices can be meaningful and important, in and of themselves, they are powerless without a persons personally placing their trust in Jesus Christ, and trusting in Christ alone. No one is placed into a right relationship with God by means of mere observance of religious ceremonies.

Romans 4:9-11 (NLT) ⁹ ... Abraham was counted as righteous by God because of his faith. ¹⁰ But how did this happen? Was he counted as righteous only after he was circumcised [by observing this religious ceremony], or was it before he was circumcised? Clearly, God accepted Abraham before he was circumcised! ¹¹ Circumcision was a sign that Abraham already had faith and that God had already accepted him and declared him to be [approved] — even before he was circumcised. So Abraham is the spiritual father of those who have faith but have not [practiced the religious ceremony of] circumcision. They are counted as [accepted] because of their faith.

Romans 4:16 (NLT) So the promise is received by faith. It is given as a free gift. And we are all certain to receive it, whether or not we live according to the [religious ceremonial] law of Moses, [or ceremonial Christian practices] if we have faith like Abraham's. For Abraham is the father of all who believe.

Criminal on cross next to Jesus

There is one man in the Bible who didn't perform one religious practice in his life; he was never baptized, never took communion, never gave money in the offering plate -- and yet he went to heaven. It is one of the two criminals on the cross next to Jesus. He placed his trust in Christ, and on that basis alone, he was granted eternal forgiveness and went to heaven.

Luke 23:42-43 (NLT) ⁴² Then [one of the criminals] said, "Jesus, remember me [rescue me] when you come into your Kingdom." ⁴³ And Jesus replied, "I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise."

#2 Mere profession of faith

Response to stirring message

Perhaps you recall your making a response to a stirring message from the Bible when you were young. You might state something like,

"When I was 12 years old, I heard a particularly stirring message at a camp and I raised my hand to say I wanted to be a Christian. It was really a moving experience and they told me because I prayed a little prayer with them that I truly was a Christian who was now going to heaven."

If no life change, bogus ticket

But if you are asked, "***Are there any life change evidences in your life on up through to this day?***" If, in all honesty, you don't know of any substantive positive changes that honors Christ in your life then I'd say, "It's highly possible that you are holding a bogus ticket."

Parable of sower

Jesus told us a parable often referred to as the parable of the sower. In it he tells of some people who will make an outward response to the gospel message, they may even have an emotional experience, but if there is no sustained life transformations -- then it wasn't real.

Matthew 13:20-23 (NLT) ²⁰ The seed on the rocky soil represents those who hear the message and immediately receive it with joy. ²¹ But since they don't have deep roots, they don't last long. They fall away as soon as they have problems or are persecuted for believing God's word. ²² The seed that fell among the thorns represents those who hear God's word, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the worries of this life and the lure of wealth, so no fruit is produced. ²³ The seed that fell on good soil represents those who truly hear and understand God's word and produce a harvest of thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times as much as had been planted!"

#1. Trust in own morality

Most frequent response

The leading false assurance is often revealed by the most frequent response to this question: "***Do you consider yourself to be a Christian who will one day go to heaven?***"

The common answer? -- *“Certainly.”*

Follow up question: *“On what basis?”*

Most frequent response: *“Well, I lead a decent moral life. I’m basically a person with good intentions, and I lead a moral life to the best of my ability. I’m not a murderer or a thief I don’t believe I’ll go to hell.”*

Morality by comparison

But the problem with this is it’s a morality by comparison. That’s like me saying I’ve been running a mile every day the past couple of weeks and I can run a lot further than your grandmother can.

Jesus’ story

Luke 18:9 (NLT) Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness [moral conduct] and scorned everyone else:

Jesus told about a man who lived an outwardly commendable life. Very religious, prayed a lot, gave 10% of his money to God, he didn’t cheat people, nor did he commit adultery. And he thought his life would impress God, especially when he compared himself with someone else who lived a despicable life.

But Jesus said that this man did not find favor with God, and he was not destined for heaven because he trusted in his own morality.

Very best 100% time is not enough

The problem with this man was that God doesn’t grade us on a curve, the standard is the holiness of God. Even if you could be at your very best 100% of the time, you might impress others, but you would be grossly short of God’s standard of holiness.

Romans 3:23 (NLT) For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.

If this is your ticket you are holding -- if it is, crumple it up and throw it away, it ain’t going to work.

Philippians 3:3-9 (NLT) ³ For we who worship by the Spirit of God are the ones who are truly circumcised. We rely on what Christ Jesus has done for us. We put no confidence in human effort, ⁴ though I could have confidence in my own effort if anyone could. Indeed, if others have reason for confidence in their own efforts, I have even more! ⁵ I was circumcised when I was eight days old. I am a pure-blooded citizen of Israel and a member of the tribe of Benjamin—a real Hebrew if there ever was one! I was a member of the Pharisees, who demand the strictest obedience to the Jewish law. ⁶ I was so zealous that I harshly persecuted the church. And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault. ⁷ I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. ⁸ Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded

everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ ⁹ (CEV) and to know that I belong to him. I could not make myself acceptable to God by obeying the Law of Moses. God accepted me simply because of my faith in Christ.

True assurance: Genuinely trust in Christ alone

Don't hold onto bogus ticket

Don't hold onto this bogus ticket of having merely made a profession of faith some years ago. Raising a hand or praying a little prayer, engaged in some religious ceremony, or having an emotional experience in a religious setting -- because in and of themselves, they are not a basis of assurance.

Personally respond through genuine trusting faith

Are any of you holding one of these five bogus tickets I just described? If you are, I plead with you be honest, throw it away and get the real thing.

John 1:12 (NLT) But to all who believed [Jesus] and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.

May you humbly admit to God that you have failed to live up to God's standards of perfect love. May you then sincerely place your trust solely in Christ to forgive you of your sin. He will, based upon His death and resurrection for your sin.

In loving gratitude for His love, you will also give allegiance to Christ as your Supreme Leader. You will seek, with His help to trust Jesus, love Him, and obey Him.

If you have genuinely trusted in Christ alone for forgiveness and to receive eternal relationship with Him, then you can know that you truly belong to Him as one of His children. You can be sure that you are truly a Christian, a follower of Christ. You can know that you have received God's free gift of heaven and an on-going personal relationship with God.

Your confidence of being a Christian is then, not based on mere temporal faith, mental assent, religious practice, mere profession of faith, or your trust in your own flawed morality. Rather, your confident assurance comes from solely trusting in Christ.

True Evidences For Assurance

Now in briefly, let me give you six very quick biblical evidences whereby you can know with certainty that you are a Christian and that you are bound for heaven:

1. Belief in foundational truths

1 John 2:22-23 (NLT) ²² And **who is a liar? Anyone who says that Jesus is not the Christ.** Anyone who denies the Father and the Son is an antichrist. ²³ Anyone who denies the Son doesn't have the Father, either. But anyone who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

1 John 4:2-3 (NLT) ² This is how we know if they have the Spirit of God: If a person claiming to be a prophet acknowledges that **Jesus Christ came in a real body**, that person has the Spirit of God. ³ But if someone claims to be a prophet and does not acknowledge the truth about Jesus, that person is not from God. Such a person has the spirit of the Antichrist, ...

1 John 4:6 (NLT) But we belong to God, and those who know God listen to us [**believe in the apostles teaching as recorded in Scripture**]. If they do not belong to God, they do not listen to us. That is how we know if someone has the Spirit of truth or the spirit of deception.

1 John 4:15 (NLT) All who **confess that Jesus is the Son of God** have God living in them, and they live in God.

1 John 5:1 (NLT) Everyone who **believes that Jesus is the Christ** has become a child of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves his children, too.

1 John 5:10-11 (NLT) ¹⁰ **All who believe in the Son of God** know in their hearts that this testimony is true. Those who don't believe this are actually calling God a liar because they don't believe what God has testified about his Son. ¹¹ And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² **Whoever has the Son has life**; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life. ¹³ I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life.

2. Trust solely in Christ

Moment of truth

Normally there is a time in your life when you reach a moment of truth. Jesus refers to this important event as being 'born again' (John 3). You soberly realize that you have sinned against God and that you can't make yourself acceptable to Him through your own efforts or religious practices. Further, you realize that if you were left to stand before God on your own on the day of judgment, you would be found guilty and sentence to eternal hell.

It is then that you place your trust solely and exclusively upon Jesus Christ to rescue you.

It is not so important that you remember the time when you were born again, but rather, that you have been and continue to place your trust in Christ.

Make sure you have done that?

Have you sincerely done that?

Are you unsure? Why not make sure today? Today may be your day of truth when you trust in Christ and are born again.

Bible says:

Romans 10:9-10 (NLT) ⁹ If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved.

Romans 10:13 (NLT) For “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

3. Trust in God's promises, not emotions

1 John 5:11-13 (NLT) ¹¹ And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹² **Whoever has the Son has life**; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life. ¹³ I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life.

We do not place our trust in an emotional experience or a lack of one, but rather in Christ. At the time of being born-again, some new believers experience intense emotions, others experience a calm conviction regarding the truth they affirm by trusting faith. Neither experience is more valid than the other.

4. Inner confirmation by God's Spirit

Romans 8:16 (NLT) For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children.

When you trust in Christ, you experience an inner assurance from God's Spirit that you belong to Him. This often, though not always, occurs when you read certain passages from the Bible, or hear a Bible message – there is a warm feeling of peace with God. If you've never experienced this, it could be a warning light that you may not truly be a Christian or it may be evidence that you are no longer living for Christ and have thus been pushing God's Spirit away from your heart and mind.

5. A growing love for fellow followers of Christ

1 John 2:9-11 (NLT) ⁹ If anyone claims, “I am living in the light,” but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is still living in darkness. ¹⁰ Anyone who loves another brother or sister is living in the light and does not cause others to stumble. ¹¹ But anyone who hates another brother or sister is still living and walking in darkness.

...

1 John 3:10-11 (NLT) ¹⁰ So now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil. Anyone who does not live righteously and does not love other believers does not belong to God. ¹¹ This is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another.

1 John 3:14-19 (NLT) ¹⁴ If we love our Christian brothers and sisters, it proves that we have passed from death to life. But a person who has no love is still dead. ¹⁵ Anyone who hates another brother or sister is really a murderer at heart. And you know that murderers don't have eternal life within them. ¹⁶ We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. ¹⁷ If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person? ¹⁸ Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth

by our actions. ¹⁹ Our actions will show that we belong to the truth, so we will be confident when we stand before God.

1 John 3:23 (NLT) And this is his commandment: We must believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as he commanded us.

1 John 4:7-8 (NLT) ⁷ Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. ⁸ But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

1 John 4:12 (NLT) No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us.

1 John 4:20-21 (NLT) ²⁰ If someone says, "I love God," but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? ²¹ And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their Christian brothers and sisters.

1 John 5:1 (NLT) Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has become a child of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves his children, too.

6. Progressive character transformation

1 John 1:6 (NLT) So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth.

1 John 2:3-5 (NLT) ³ And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. ⁴ If someone claims, "I know God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. ⁵ But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him.

1 John 2:29 (NLT) Since we know that Christ is righteous, we also know that all who do what is right are God's children.

1 John 3:6-10 (NLT) ⁶ Anyone who continues to live in him will not sin. But anyone who keeps on sinning does not know him or understand who he is. ⁷ Dear children, don't let anyone deceive you about this: When people do what is right, it shows that they are righteous, even as Christ is righteous. ⁸ But when people keep on sinning, it shows that they belong to the devil, who has been sinning since the beginning. But the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ Those who have been born into God's family do not make a practice of sinning, because God's life is in them. So they can't keep on sinning, because they are children of God. ¹⁰ So now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil. Anyone who does not live righteously and does not love other believers does not belong to God.

1 John 4:3-4 (NLT) ³ But if someone claims to be a prophet and does not acknowledge the truth about Jesus, that person is not from God. Such a person has the spirit of the Antichrist, which you heard is coming into the world and indeed is already here. ⁴ But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory over those people, because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world.

1 John 5:18 (NLT) We know that God's children do not make a practice of sinning, for God's Son holds them securely, and the evil one cannot touch them.

Three areas of progressive character transformation:

a. Changing life

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT) This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

Not over night. God loves you just as you are. But He loves you too much to leave you just as you are. If you are a true believer, then His Spirit dwells within your life and He progressively brings about changes in your life: Your values change, your behaviors change, your relationships change – all for the better.

If you claim to be a Christ-follower, then there will be a fundamental character change in your life that's ongoing.

If you see consistent changes, then that's assuring -- if you don't and others don't, then you need to do a serious examination to see if Jesus is truly in your life.

2 Corinthians 13:5 (NLT) Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. ...

2. Changing goals,

Mark 8:34-38 (NLT) ³⁴Then, calling the crowd to join his disciples, he said, **“If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me.** ³⁵ If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will save it. ³⁶ And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul? ³⁷ Is anything worth more than your soul? ³⁸ If anyone is ashamed of me and my message in these adulterous and sinful days, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he returns in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

“My life is in your hands, Lord. My hopes, my dreams, the things that I pursue in live -- I give it all to you.”

When is the last time that you have sincerely prayed to the Lord, “Take my life, family, abilities, career, -- I'll live my life for you.”

If you are seeing changes of priorities occurring from time to time, then it is a sign that you are a true follower of Jesus Christ.^v

3. Changing view of sin

1 John 2:3-6 (NLT) ³ And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. ⁴ If someone claims, “I know God,” but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. ⁵ But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. ⁶ Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.

Conclusion

Some of you, as I have been talking here, are saying the Spirit has been speaking to you, and you've been saying to yourself:

I remember when I placed my trust in Christ, and Christ alone to forgive me. Even now, within my heart, I sense a renewed sense of peace that I belong to God. I don't love other Christians flawlessly, but I do authentically. Over the years, I've been seeing how God has been working to refine my character to become a bit more like Him.

God's Scriptures say, that you can rejoice. You can have assurance, a confidence that your truly are a Christian, that you are one of His undeserving, yet grateful children.

It is true, God isn't finished with transforming you yet. You've got a ways to go. The battle to faithfully follow Christ is not over. You'll have some battles and some bruises between now and the day you go to heaven. But the outcome is certain that your destiny is heaven.

But there are some of you who are holding a bogus ticket and we crumpled them one by one and you are sitting at the gate without a pass. And I say to you rejoice as well because right now can be the time you can call upon the name of the Lord and be saved.

Let's bow heads, and remember that the most important issue in all of life is where you are going to spend eternity. Where is it? Where will you spend eternity.

Prayer: "Lord Jesus I know I am a sinner and I know that some day I will stand before you I know I need to be rescued by Jesus. Lord Jesus today be my savior, my forgiver, and my leader.

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Oakwood
 COMMUNITY CHURCH
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Paul Phair has served as Senior Pastor of Oakwood Community Church since 1987. He earned a Master of Divinity from Denver Seminary, and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. He is married to Bev; they have two married children.



ii You faith is not yet well informed.
You may think somehow that you are
being more humble about your faith
because of your uncertainty.

ii Mt. 7:9-11

iii **Matthew 7:13-14 (NLT)** ¹³“You can enter
God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate.
The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is
wide for the many who choose that way. ¹⁴But
the gateway to life is very narrow and the road
is difficult, and only a few ever find it.

iv Romans 4:9-12; Phil 2

v Also 1 John love of world