



Applied Faith Men's Bible Study

South Hills Baptist Church

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## Saul to Paul, A True Conversion

### Lesson #3

Acts 9:3-31

Do you know people who claim to be Christians but doubt whether they really are or not? More importantly, have you ever wondered about your own faith? Here are seven sure signs of a person that's truly been converted.

#### **No Ongoing Pattern of Sin**

The Book of 1 John to me is the litmus test for those who claim to be a Christian but really are just false converts. Many profess to be Christ's but do they possess Christ? Apparently, John had been dealing with a lot of false converts and even today there are tares mixed in with the wheat and it's hard to tell the difference by looking at them but there are ways to tell. John gives us help by writing that "Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the

truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4) and “Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness” (1 John 2:9). John makes it clear that “Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness” (1 John 3:4) since “No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning” (1 John 3:6-8). In other words, if someone claims to be a Christian and yet makes a practice of sinning, they are lying to you and to God and are “of the devil.” No Christian is sinless but we do sin less but those who keep “on sinning has either seen him or known him.”

### **Loving One Another**

Jesus once said that by our love for one another “everyone will know you are My disciples” (John 13:35). If you are hating or being hateful to your brother or sister and calling yourself a Christian, then you are a liar. Now I didn’t say this, God did in 1 John 4:20-21 where he writes “If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother” (1 John 4:20-21). I have had some very hateful “Christians” attack me and call me names and yet they claim to be a Christian. I would imagine that many of these couldn’t be proven guilty of being a Christian in court of law because there wouldn’t be enough evidence to convict them. Jesus spoke about hating someone as committing murder in their heart. In Matthew 5:21-23 He says, “You have heard that it was said to those of

old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire."

### **Being Convicted of Sin**

We all sin and the Apostle John knew this which is why he wrote "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:8, 10) but the difference is when we sin, we are convicted of our sin by the Holy Spirit. Conviction of sin is one of the works of the Holy Spirit. Just before He was to die on the cross and go back to the Father after His resurrection, Jesus promised that He would send the Holy Spirit "And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8). If there is no remorse, no guilt, or no conviction after we have sinned, then that person may either be grieving the Holy Spirit or may not even be born again because God gives His Spirit only to those who obey Him because the Holy Spirit, "God has given to those who obey him" (Acts 5:32). David was heavily convicted after His murder of Bathsheba's husband and his adulterous affair. If there is no conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit, there may be no Holy Spirit in the person at all.

### **Do You Love God or the World?**

We return again to the 1 John in chapter two where He writes "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the

desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world” (1 John 2:15-16). James asks the rhetorical question “Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4). You cannot love the world or the things of the world and say you love God too because these two are not compatible with one another. (see also Galatians 5:19-25)

### **Where is Your Heart at?**

If you love God then you will be storing up treasure in heaven and not on earth because the things of the world, including earthly treasures, will all pass away. This is why Jesus commanded us to “not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matt 6:19-21) since “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money” (Matt 6:24). Put another way, your checkbook ledger or your credit card statement indicates where your true treasure is and where your heart is also. If it’s in things then you are serving money (and your own pleasures) but if you are generous to others including your local church, then you are truly serving God. James writes “If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled,’ without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also, faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (James 2:15-17) because “if anyone has

the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth" (1 John 2:17-18). James and John both write that we must love in deed and not just in words because faith without any works is a dead-on-arrival faith.

### **True Christians Bear True Fruit**

Returning to James he wrote that "faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (James 2:17). He is not saying that we are saved by works but a person that is saved will naturally produce fruits of good works. False prophets and teachers, just like false converts will be known "by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, you will recognize them by their fruits" (Matt 7:16-20). Jesus is clear that if a tree doesn't bear good fruit that comes as a result of conversion, then that tree will be cut down and cast into the fire. He also said that we would "recognize them by their fruits." We can also recognize them from their lack of fruit. If they are not truly saved, they'll produce bad fruit because bad trees cannot produce good fruit any more than a good tree can produce bad fruit. What a tragic day that will be for many who say to Christ "Lord, Lord" but He will say to them "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness" (Matt 7:23). What is even worse is that "On that day many will say" "lord, Lord" but these same "many," not a few, will be cast into the lake of fire because they were never really born again (Rev 20:11-15).

## **Do We Deny or Proclaim Christ?**

This is one terrifying passage where Jesus says “everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God” (Luke 12:8-9). How many people that you work with, or among your friends or in your family know that you are a Christian? If you deny Christ before others then Christ will deny you before the Father and the angels of God. We have far too many who claim to be Christians but are not living like Christians. They are silent, underground, secret agent Christians who are afraid to bring Christ up in the conversation because we fear man more than God (Matt 10:28) and they are not like Paul who was not ashamed of the gospel (Rom 1:16). If we are ashamed of Christ, so will He of us on the day of His visitation, but then it will be too late.

## **Conclusion**

If this article has made you doubt your salvation or whether you are truly a Christian or not, then I say good! I know that sounds cruel but I would rather you find out today that you are not a true believer so that you can repent and trust in Christ right now than find out that you are not one on the day of Christ’s coming judgment of the world (Rev 20:11-15). I plead with you to examine yourself “to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you—unless, of course, you fail the test” (2 Cor 13:5). Author Jack Wellman

## Application/Activity

This week's application is to have a heart to heart with yourself and God. Go through this list and ask yourself about each of these items listed. Are you truly a convert of Christ? Use this time to better yourself as a Christian. We were made to worship our Creator. We need to spend more and more of our time with Him. If you don't feel this need to spend more of your time with God, have you truly had a change of heart in your belief that Christ is our Savior. This activity is for you alone, no one else. Ask the tough questions and listen for God's answer and be willing to respond appropriately.