

***Question: How can I know that I am saved and will go to heaven?***

Some people think that it is not possible to speak with any confidence about their own eternal salvation before the judgment day. But the apostle John said: “I write these things to **you who believe** in the name of the Son of God so that you may **know** that you have eternal life” (1John 5:13; emphasis mine. RY). This statement clearly affirms that we can “know” with confidence that we “have (present tense) eternal life.”

There are those who also miss the fact that this confident knowledge is only given to “you who believe.” The word “believe” as used in this verse is a present active participle in the original language of the Bible. This means that the faith involved must be a continuing, active faith in the Son of God. The entire letter of 1 John is written to the children of God who have been taught to “remain” in Christ (1 John 2:27). John said: “And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming” (1John 2:28). If a person does not “remain” and “continue” in faith in the Son of God, he has no foundation for confidence of his eternal salvation.

We should also understand that this confidence of eternal life is not based on feelings we may have or on things we may have done. It must be a confidence in what God has done for us. Our salvation is entirely by the grace of God. The apostle Paul wrote: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). This saving faith that connects with the amazing grace of God is a faith that demonstrates its presence by works of obedience. Paul added: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph 2:10).

These works are not what save us. To the contrary, it is the nature of true faith that it works the works of God. The book of Acts illustrates how this faith initially responds to the grace of God by obedience. After Peter explained how they had crucified the Son of God who had risen from the dead, the people believed him and “were cut to the heart” (Acts 2:37). When they asked, “What shall we do?” they were told: “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive

the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Act 2:38). A few verses later we are told: “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Act 2:41-42). The Holy Spirit is given to help those who trust in God’s grace to continue in this kind of faithful obedience.

Neither should we think that our assurance of salvation is based on our ability to always understand and do everything exactly right. The letter of 1 John affirms we can know we have eternal life. Surprisingly, it also says that we cannot claim to be without any sin (1 John 1:8, 10). As believers in Christ, we have not yet become fully like Christ. We will still be in the process of becoming like him until the day we see him (1 John 3:2). However, if we continue through obedient faith in Christ to walk in the light as he is in the light, “we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin” (1John 1:7). The word “purifies” is a present tense active verb. This concept of purifying means that the blood of Jesus continues to cleanse us even though we may sin in our ignorance and foolishness.

We can be confident of our eternal salvation. To do so is not boastful because our confidence is not in ourselves or our actions, but is in the Lord. He simply asks that we live by faith in him and never deny him (Matthew 10:32-33).

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