

# Biblical Tests of True Faith

by Paul Washer

---

*Paul Washer emphasizes the importance of biblical tests to discern true faith and the transformative nature of salvation in Christ.*

**Duration:** 1:06:55

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 31:31

**Topics:** "True Faith"

---

## Description

In this sermon, the preacher shares two powerful illustrations to explain the impact of conversion on a person's life. The first illustration involves a man who realizes his wrongdoings and feels miserable after a confrontation. He seeks forgiveness from God and apologizes to his wife, demonstrating a genuine repentance and change of heart. The second illustration portrays a believer who faces pressure and frustration in his daily life. However, despite his initial outburst, his conversion has brought him a deep understanding of God's grace and forgiveness, leading to a sense of joy and peace in the midst of challenges. The sermon emphasizes that conversion brings about a transformative experience where individuals see themselves and their sin in a new light, leading to repentance and ultimately, joy in Christ.

---

## Transcript

Let's open up our Bibles to 1 John chapter 5, verse 13. 1 John chapter 5, verse 13. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, I come before you today in the name of your Son. And Lord, there is a great struggle in this building, a thing that has come to hinder this service.

And I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, that you would put it away, and that your word would be proclaimed, and that the Spirit of God would work in the hearts of men, that all flesh be abased, that Christ alone be exalted. Father, you know, you know. Restore the work, Lord, that you began this morning.

And let nothing hinder it. In Jesus' name, Amen. Today we're going to be talking about salvation.

There is nothing more important than the gospel of Jesus Christ and salvation. Most of you are younger than I am. But you'll find that life is going to flee quickly, that your days are going to pass quickly, that it will be less than a century, less than several decades, that every one of us will stand before God and be judged.

There are some who will stand before Him and hear, Well done, my good and faithful servant. There will be others who have rejected grace all their life. They have rejected grace, and because of that, they will hear, Depart from me, I never knew you.

It is very clear-cut in Scripture, but because of the country in which we live, filled with so much heresy, it is hard for many to discern whether or not they're truly Christian. Some take the gospel as though it were something to buy after a sales pitch, thinking that their eternal security is locked down, that it is secure, because one time in their life they prayed a prayer and asked Jesus to come in. There are others who walk in condemnation because they've had legalism and all sorts of self-righteousness thrown upon them, so that even though they are true believers in Christ, they walk in constant doubt.

Only the Scriptures can give us the correct balance. Only the Scriptures. How do we know that we are truly Christian when it is so easy to be deceived? On one side, being nonchalant about the faith.

On the other side, wreaking self-righteousness. How can we truly know that we are Christian? And that is the reason why this book was written. 1 John chapter 5 tells us these things.

What are these things? The things written in this book were written to whom? To those who believe in the name of the Son of God. It was written to true believers. For what purpose? That upon hearing the Word of God, the Spirit of God, would apply it to their heart, and they would have a biblical assurance that they were converted.

Now that's John's purpose. But at the same time, I want you to see that this purpose can reverse itself upon those who think they believe, and yet do not. Because John is going to give us a series of tests by which we can examine our lives to see if we are in the faith.

And those who are true believers will rejoice and be made strong at what they hear in this text. But those who are unbelievers, well, there are two possibilities. That their hearts are so hardened that they'll hear these standards, judge themselves, and still have peace.

Or, their hearts will break, and they will begin to say, I do not know Him. I do not know Him. Now, before we get to these tests, I want to go through a small introduction in this way.

How do we know that we are Christian? There is one sense, and we can look at this logically, but with a true logic and an honesty. The Bible promises this, for God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life. There is propositional truth here.

Statements being made. And those statements are this, the one who believes in Christ has eternal life. And so there's logic.

There is reason. You ask yourself, do I believe? Do I trust in Christ alone? Or am I trusting in Christ plus something? So many today claim to have a faith in Christ, and yet when I press them, press them, press them, eventually they work themselves back around to their own self-righteousness. But the true believer... Well, let me say it this way.

It would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than it would be for someone to pass into heaven with a shred of self-righteousness upon them. The true believer is a broken person. The true believer mourns over sin.

And the true believer only has hope and joy and peace because of Christ. The true believer does not delight in constant inward looks, rejoicing in their own piety. And they do not call attention to themselves, but they adopt the sayings of the psalmist who said, Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thee be the glory.

They will not draw attention to themselves. Will not boast in their own righteousness. Will not exalt their own piety.

Will not open up the door and say, Look at me! Because your most righteous deeds are filthy rags before a holy God. And it stinks in the nostrils of God. But the true believer says, I have nothing except Christ and Christ alone.

They have grown in true spiritual wisdom so that they say this. I no longer boast in the flesh, but I hope in Christ. Christ alone.

I know and have seen and will see again genuine believers who struggle with doubting their salvation. I have seen that. Sometimes you hear the false teaching that if you doubt your salvation, it's because you're lost.

That's not true. The reason why this book was written is because a genuine believer can come to the point of doubting their salvation. A genuine believer can doubt their salvation, but a genuine believer will never doubt.

Will never doubt one truth. That Christ is their only hope. That Christ is their only hope.

A genuine believer may go back and forth in this. Am I saved? Am I not saved? Am I saved? But they will not go back and forth with, Am I righteous enough to be saved? Or am I not righteous enough to be saved? That's been settled in their heart. That's been settled in their hearts.

Now, verse 13. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. I mentioned in the introduction that there is a sense in which we know we believe based upon reason.

We know we are saved based upon reason. The promise is there and I believe it. But there is another way.

And that is the witness of the Spirit within our own heart. Now, primarily that witness is the great transformation that begins to work in us throughout the full course of our life. But there is also a subjective witness of the Spirit.

I know on that day that I was converted, that I was saved. I knew I was a child of God. There was an assurance.

There was a peace. Yes, it was subjective. But it was real.

Something happened to me. It was more than just the adoption of a morality. It was more than just starting a new ethic.

And it was more than just joining some religious maneuver or movement. Something happened inside me. And every true believer will have that testimony.

With some, it may be more dramatic than others. But nonetheless, it is a supernatural thing, the work of salvation. And if we have been converted, there will be something of that supernatural testimony within us.

It's the work of the Spirit who indwells us. Now, immediately people want to say, but the heart can be deceived. You shouldn't follow emotions and all things like that.

And that is true, but we still cannot eliminate the subjective from the Christian life. Something happened. The believer says, I was changed on that day.

Something inexplicable happened to me. I was in darkness. It became light.

I had no peace. I was filled with peace. I knew not the love of God.

And the love of God was shed abroad in my heart. So we have the idea of reason. We have the idea of the supernatural.

Something occurred in us. Something changed in us. And then we have our text here.

What John is basically going to do is based upon the doctrine of regeneration. You cannot understand 1 John unless you understand the doctrine of regeneration. And what is that doctrine? That salvation is more than just a human decision.

That when someone is truly converted, God changes their nature. He changes their heart and he writes upon their heart his laws. That is the promise of the entire New Covenant.

And then the history of Israel. We see Israel being brought out of Egypt. And what do we see? They are given the law.

Tablets of stone. Something external. And then we see nothing but a history of disobedience.

And then we come to Jeremiah. Hundreds of years later. And God prophesies.

God speaks through Jeremiah and he says this. I'm going to make a new covenant. And it's going to be different.

Not like the covenant I made with them when I brought them out of Egypt. No, it's not going to be me giving them tablets of external stone. What I'm going to do is I'm going to write my laws on their heart.

And they will have no need of being taught about these things. For I myself will teach them. And they will be my people.

And I will be their God. So, we have Paul saying in 2 Corinthians 5, If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation. And here's what you need to understand.

There is a direct relationship between nature and will. Nature and will. If the nature is evil, the will will be inclined to evil.

You must understand that. That is the case of every man born on this planet. He is born with a fallen nature and his inclination, the direction of his will is toward evil.

What must happen? A man must be regenerated. His heart must be transformed by God. And when God gives a man a new nature, that new nature has new and righteous affections.

And those new and righteous affections drive that man to the will of God. To wanting to do the will of God. And that's why John now can write that those who truly know Christ are going to live a certain way.

Do you see that? There is going to be fruit. Fruit. Matthew chapter 7. You will know them.

Not just the false prophet. But you will know all. By their fruit.

Let me put it this way. I don't care how much scripture you know. What do you do? What do you do? The Bible does not look at what so much comes out of your mouth.

What do you do? How do you live? What are you like? That is the evidence of a truly converted person. I hear so many people taking Matthew chapter 4. They say when the devil comes you have to quote scripture at him. Jesus did not defeat the devil in those 40 days in the wilderness because he quoted scripture at the devil.

That is the silliest thing I have ever heard. It is predominant in the land, isn't it? He did not defeat the devil by quoting scripture at the devil. He defeated the devil by obeying the scripture he quoted.

Do you see that? Do you see that? This is not wizardry. This is not magic. This is faith and obedience.

That is what this is. Now let's look at these tests. Let's start in chapter 1. Verse 5. This is the message we have heard from him and announced to you that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.

God is light. Now when we hear that, primarily people begin to think yes, God is holy. There is no blemish in him.

And that is true. But that is probably not John's principle idea here. You see there was a group of people.

They can't really be called Gnostics, but at least they were the beginning of the Gnostics. A terrible, terrible cult that did great damage to Christianity in the first several centuries of Christianity. And actually still exists today.

Not only in a group called Gnostics, but it has permeated even parts of evangelicalism. They were a dangerous group. And they were teaching basically this.

That God is not light. God is dark in the sense that God is hidden. Esoteric.

That you can't really know God. The common man, the common believer can't really know God. Only these super spiritual people could actually know God.

And in not knowing God, we also couldn't really understand the will of God or what he really requires. You see this in secular thought today, don't you? All the politicians will say they believe in God. It's just that he can't be known and he hasn't spoken.

So you can say you believe in God and yet you don't have to do a thing he says. But John comes back and what does he say? No, God is light. And in this case, knowing John, knowing the Gospel of John, I would say that his principal idea is God has revealed himself.

God has made himself known. So look at it that way. This is the message we have heard from him and announced to you that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.

Verse 5, if we say we have fellowship with him. So many times this passage is taught as referring to believers of whether or not believers are walking in fellowship or believers are not walking in fellowship. But that's completely outside the context of this passage.

To have fellowship with God is to be a believer. To be outside of that fellowship with God is to be an unbeliever. Now that's all there is to it.

That's what John is teaching. So basically he's saying if we say we are Christian, if we say we have fellowship with him and yet walk in darkness. Now the word walk here is peripateo from the Greek.

Peri meaning around and pateo meaning to walk. It means to walk around. It is a word commonly used by John, commonly used by Paul.

And it refers to a style of life in every area of life. That the Bible sees no room for dividing our existence into secular and sacred. Or there are places where we should obey God and places where God does not pertain to God.

That is not the way the Bible sees it. That all things pertain to God. And that our style of life, if it is honest, if it is true, we will practice our religion in every place that we walk.

So he says if we say that we have fellowship with him, that we are believers and yet we walk. In what? That our style of life is immersed in darkness. Now what is darkness? It's not what you think.

It is more evil than you actually believe. And it is less evil than you actually believe. You think darkness would have to do with something that would have to do with Satanism.

Or witchcraft. Or atheism. No, the idea here is this.

What is light? God's revelation. What has God revealed? He has told us who he is. And he has told us what he has commanded.

That is light. We know we have light shed upon who is God. We have light shed upon what is God's will.

The one who walks in darkness walks in a way that contradicts what God has told us about himself and contradicts what God has said about his will. That is what it means to walk in darkness. Now, I want us to look at something.

Because we have to be very, very careful here. First of all, the word peripateo is in a present tense denoting continuous action. It's not just talking about a moment in time, but it's talking about the style of a person's life.

So that if you were to simply judge a person by one moment in time, you could grossly misjudge that person. You could see a true believer commit a deed that was sin and immediately write them off as an unbeliever. But that would not be biblical.

It would not be fair. It would not be correct. Or you could see a person with grotesque morality and hatred toward God.

You could see them and in one moment, see them do something of a righteous deed and come to the conclusion that they are believers. So you see, both of those aorist tense moments, those points in time are deceiving. But what the Bible is talking about is looking at their entire style of life.

How do they live over the full course of their days and over the full course of all their activities? How do they live? Do you see that? Now, here's the question for you. Do you walk in darkness? And realize this, you could walk in darkness and be very, very moral. Do you walk in a way that contradicts what God has revealed about His nature, about who He is? Do you walk in a way that contradicts what God has revealed about His will? Does your lifestyle, is it a contradiction to the will of God? Or is it in accordance with the will of God? We could set it this way, if we wanted to go back to the book of Ephesians.

Are you walking according to the course of this world, of this age? Are you going with the flow? Are you walking contrary to the course of this world with your eyes set upon the will of God and being conformed to the image of God? So that's the first thing that you must answer. And these tests, before we go any further, are also very important for parents. Because a child raised in a godly home, for the most part will say, I believe, I believe, I believe.

And if a child says, I believe, no one should ever look at that child and say, no, you don't. We shouldn't squash the fire that is within them. But also, do not be hasty in your affirmation of that faith.

A proper thing to do is to say, if you believe, you are saved. But let us watch your life. Let us examine ourselves in the light of Scripture until you come to a full assurance of your faith based upon the written word of God.

Do you see that? Just a practical thing here for the church, for parents. Another very appropriate thing to do, something that is very helpful. When a child says, I believe, like they want to participate in the Lord's Supper or they want to be baptized after seeing a baptism.

Well, can I do that too? Sit down and discuss the matter with them, but then tell them, here's what I want you to do. Sunday, go to the elders. Go to the elders and talk to them.

Well, Dad, will you come with me? No. No, I won't. If you truly think that the Lord has worked in your life, go talk to Brother Anthony and Brother Mark.

And set up a meeting with them so that they can discuss these matters with you. It's a really practical way to see that someone wants to be baptized just because all the other kids were baptized. It's a really practical way of seeing that someone wants to be in the Lord's Supper just because they saw some other child their age in the Lord's Supper.

Because wouldn't you want your elders involved in this? Their counsel. And when you see a child that says, then to the elders I will go. Because I have been converted.

Wow. And they sit down and explain their faith and explain what God has done in their lives. Now that, that's something.

Now, just a practical thought. And so the first test is this. A true believer will walk in the light as a style of life.

Will walk in accordance with what God has revealed about His nature and His will. Now, if you take my words seriously at this moment, you should be trembling. Why? Because believers, true believers, the most mature believers, sin.

Even in the most pious life, it is oftentimes two steps forward and three steps backwards. So what do we do? Are we not Christian? Are we all to be condemned? Have we all lost our assurance this morning? Because no one walks constantly, continuously, in accordance with what God has told us about Himself or His will. And if you think you have, I can assure you, you have now truly flunked the test.

You're not Christian. You are deceived. And so where are we to go from here? Well, we just need to keep reading because now John's going to deal with that problem.

Let's begin in verse 8. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. And here's something that's very important. When you say that God is dark, that He hasn't told us who He really is, and that you can't really know His will, then it's very easy to begin to believe that you are without sin.

The more God is hidden from men, the more self-righteousness you are going to find. And the more men truly know and proclaim God, the more humility before God you are going to see. Do you see that? So these believers, they've heard now that if you're a true believer, you will walk according to the nature and will of God.

And they're sitting there, but John, we've sinned. We still sin. We struggle with sin.

We hate our sin, but we do sin, John. And so John gives them another test. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

So one of the great evidences that you are truly Christian is not that you no longer sin, but that you now recognize your sin and you see it as sin. As a matter of fact, if you don't recognize your sin as sin it's evidence that you are not a believer. So he says, if we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

God's truth implanted by the Holy Spirit is simply not in us. Verse 9, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we confess our sins, what is one of the greatest evidences of a true believer? They recognize sin in their life and they confess it.

They confess it. They are confessional in that way. They are marked by brokenness and they are marked by confession.

But don't think that the Christian life is simply looking at your sin, being broken over it, and confessing it. No! When we look at our sin and we confess our sin, being broken by our sin, we also experience what? The grace of God and the joy of our salvation not in our own works, but in the works of Christ on our behalf. Do you see that? Now what does confession mean? Lord, forgive me of my sins.

No, that is not what confession is. That is asking the Lord to forgive you of your sins, but that is not confession. Or Lord, if I have sinned in any way, forgive me.

That is not confession either. What is confession? It comes from the Greek word, homologeo. Homo, which means like or same.

And logeo, to confess. Homologeo is to confess the same. Now what does that mean? Is it not the ministry of the Holy Spirit to speak to us about our sin? It is His ministry to convict not only the world, but also us of our sin.

So let's say that we get up in the morning and we have been impatient with one of our children, or we have been impatient with our wife, or we have been cold towards someone, wrongly cold towards someone. And as we leave the house or leave the building, the Holy Spirit begins to deal with us, bringing Scripture maybe to mind, showing us we have sinned. And so the Holy Spirit says, you have sinned.

You have been impatient. Confession is when you agree with what God has spoken. What you say about me, God, is true.

I have sinned. I have been impatient. Do you see that? It is speaking the same thing.

It is agreeing with God over your sin. That's confession. That's confession.

And the true believer, they're marked by it. They're marked by it. But let me just show you kind of how it works.

Because we've talked about revelation. Now we're talking about confession. A person is walking in this world.

He's an unbeliever. He's in darkness. And all of a sudden, he opens his eyes and illuminates his mind.

And he sees God as he's never seen Him before. And in light of that light, he sees himself as he has never seen himself before. And he sees his sin as he has never seen his sin before.

And he is broken as he has never been broken before. Yet, he does not repent unto death. It is not a brokenness unto despair.

Because in that revelation of God, he sees Christ as he has never seen it before. And he trusts. He believes.

And then what happens? He is filled with joy. He trades his sackcloth and ashes for the raiment of joy. Now, as believers, what happens? What happens as believers? As we grow, you're a brand new believer.

And you begin to study the Scriptures. As you study the Scriptures, the nature of God, the nature of God revealed in His commands, His righteousness, His holiness, He begins to show you more and more and more of your sin, which leads to a greater and greater brokenness, which leads to a more profound confession. And that profound confession turns into a more profound joy, so that at the end of your life, you are more holy than when you began.

And yet, at the same time, you are more broken than when you began. And yet, at the same time, you are more joyful than when you began. And a great interchange has happened.

Instead of now boasting in your performance, which reeks in the nostrils of God, you now boast in the finished work of Christ alone. Do you see that? Confession. What is one of the greatest evidences that you

have truly become a believer? It's confession.

That is not to say that a Christian has no victory. They do have victory. That is not to say that a Christian just is saved in his sin.

No, he is saved out of his sin. God works in his life and begins to change him. But know this, you will never reach a point of perfection until the day you step over into glory.

Is your life marked by confession? Is your life marked by confession? Do you see sin in a different light now? And does it bring you to agree with God and confess it? And at times, even, confessing sin to a brother and sister in Christ whom you have wronged. Let me give you another illustration. This will help some of you, I think, who struggle in this area.

Not that you do not confess. It's just that sometimes your wrangling with sin causes you to doubt that you have been converted. A man is unconverted.

He's getting ready to leave for the office. It's snowing outside. He's late.

He's dropping papers out of his briefcase. He's got to get through the kitchen. He doesn't have time to eat.

No cup of coffee. He's miserable. He reaches for the door.

He's going to run out to the office. And at that moment, his wife calls him and says, take out the trash. Without even thinking, the man spins around and says, what's wrong with you? You take out the trash.

Don't you know I'm late? I've got a job to do. I've got all this pressure on me. You take out the trash.

And he walks out the door totally justified. Has no problem with what he's done. No problem whatsoever.

Gets in the car. Has coffee. Goes to his job.

Makes his presentation. He's fine. Three months later, he's converted.

And then nine months later, he's coming down the steps, walking through the kitchen. It's snowing outside. He's got all kinds of pressure on him.

There's papers flying out of his briefcase. His boss is just giving him up and down problems. He's getting ready to walk outside and all of a sudden, his wife comes down the stairs behind him and says, take out the trash before you leave.

And without even thinking, he spins around and goes, what's wrong with you? Take out the trash. Don't you see? I've got an appointment. I'm dropping papers.

I've got so much pressure on me. He said, well, Brother Paul, what happened then? I mean, what did conversion do to him? What did conversion do? The moment he spun around and the moment those words started coming out of his mouth, it was like someone took a knife and drove it straight through his heart. And he bucks up against it.

He gathers his papers. He doesn't apologize. He knows he's wrong.

He's even more furious now. He walks out the door. He's miserable.

He is miserable. He gets in his car. He's going to drive off.

He can't even drive the car. He's miserable for what he's done. He bucks up against it.

He makes it to the office. He's got to go in and give his presentation. And finally, he just looks at his team and goes, look, I'll be there in a minute.

I'll be there in a minute. And he gets down on his knees. Oh God, forgive me.

And when he finishes there, he gets on his cell phone and he says, Wife, I am so sorry for what I've done. Forgive me. I can't go in there unless you forgive me.

You don't think that's powerful? You don't think that's supernatural? I'm telling you it is. Something's happened to this man. And gradually, it will start coming out more and more and more.

It will take a while. But when his wife comes down and says, take out the trash. Say, I can't right now.

Or, okay. I will. Because he's no longer consumed with self.

God has worked in his heart. Do you see that? That's what we're talking about. That's why I can't stand these extremes.

This one extreme where you can just be nonchalant about sin. Yeah, I'm a believer. And then this other extreme.

Well, you sin, so you're lost. Both of them are deadly. You see, you can walk a thousand miles that way and a thousand miles that way and be in falsehood.

But to walk in the truth is like to walk on the edge of a razor blade. And there are ditches on both sides and you can fall off in them. Avoid the extremes.

We're a changed people. We can say that. If a Christian ever puts on his t-shirt, changed, then I would say he's a heretic unless he puts on the back.

And still changing. Fundamentally, by nature, we have changed. But the working out of that change will be a lifetime.

Will be a lifetime and not perfected until glory. So what is one of the evidences that we are converted, truly converted? Well, let me put it this way. Someone tells me I got a new relationship with God.

I ask them this question. Do you have a new relationship with sin? Because the evidence you have a new relationship with God is that you have a new relationship with sin. It's like the illustration of marriage.

I have a new relationship with her. Well, then that means you have a new relationship with every other woman on this planet. A relationship of no.

You see? Now, let's go on to the next test. In chapter 2, verse 4. Let's begin in verse 3. By this we know that we have come to know Him. Now, this is a... Now, look at that.

By this we know that we are Christian if we keep His commandments. Now, even bolder John's going to become. The one who says I have come to know Him and does not keep His commandments is a liar.

Now, let's just stop there for a moment. If I had a nickel for every time somebody in the United States told me, well, I know I live in the world just like the devil and everything else, but you don't know what's inside my heart. I really do love Him.

I really do know Him. What is the answer to that? John provides the answer. The one who says I have come to know Him and does not keep His commandments is a liar.

Now, again, the idea keep here. Present tense. Talking about a style of life.

He's not talking about sinless perfection, but he's talking about a new relationship with the commandments of God. And let's just go back now. Do you have a new relationship with God? Then you have a new relationship with sin because you have a new relationship with God's commands.

Prior to conversion, a man does not walk around thinking about the commandments of God, trying to obey the commandments of God, broken when he breaks the commandments of God, confessing when he breaks the commandments of God. He has no relationship with the commandments of God. He does what is right in his own eyes.

But if he's been truly converted, what will happen? There will begin a relationship with God's commands, with God's will. He will want to know God's will for his life. He will want to obey God's will.

He will ask for power for obedience. He will confess sin when he finds himself breaking God's will. This is the evidence of true conversion.

It is. Is it found in you? Is it found in you? Again, we are not talking about some self-righteous Pharisee. Not at all.

We may be talking about a person who is struggling and struggling greatly, but their struggle comes from the fact that they now want to obey God's will. They desire to obey God's will. It is meaningful to them.

Meaningful to them. Precious to them. And now, some of you, because I know the works of the devil, I know how he works.

Some of you are saying, but so often I don't want to study the Scriptures. That's exactly what you're saying. So often I'm lazy.

Does that mean I'm not converted? So often I don't memorize. So often I don't open the Bible. Does that mean I'm not converted? I can join you in that song you just sang.

None of us study the Word as we should. None of us memorize as we should. But here's something I know.

Prior to conversion it did not bother me that I was lazy with regard to piety and devotion in the study of Scriptures. Now that too kills me at times. Paul, you're a preacher.

How can you not want to get up out of bed right now and study? Do you see? If you struggle with this and I know you do, if you struggle with this, this too tells me something about you. You see, if men are truly radically depraved and there is no virtue or desire of God in them apart from the work of the Spirit and yet you're sitting there saying, I desire to be more like Him. I want to know Him better.

I want to obey Him more. And it kills me when I don't accomplish the very things I desire. That tells me that something has happened to you.

But you will have a new relationship with His Word. You will. Listen to me, young people.

Listen to me. Because you don't know what you think you know. And I know that.

Because when I was your age I did not know what I thought I knew. And I know that because 30 years from now if I live that long I'll look back to this very day standing in this pulpit and realize I did not know what I thought I knew even now. This is part of the Christian life.

There are going to be trials in your life. There's going to be suffering. There's going to be walking down paths for days and maybe even years that you never should have walked down.

And God's going to allow all of it to happen. Not because He dislikes you, but because He loves you. He's going to allow all these things to happen so that little by little all your own trust and your own wisdom will be made void.

Do you see that? And you will no longer do as Israel did in the book of Judges doing what is right in your own eyes. But you will seek to live by His commands. Not by what you see.

Not by what you feel. Not even by what you think. But by thus saith the Lord.

It will become the guide of your life. So that if He says stay, you stay. If He says run, you run.

If He says walk, you walk. Now let's go on to another test. Verse 6 of chapter 2. The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as he walked.

I've read this before and seen looks on people's faces if I read their faces correctly. In which on hearing this text it was the final nail in their coffin. What do you mean? The one who is saved will walk as He walked? We're not talking about John here.

We're not even talking about the Apostle Paul. We're talking about Jesus. The perfect man without spot, without blemish.

Undeiled, unsoiled. Always doing the will of His Father. The only one to pass into glory based upon His own righteousness.

You're saying that in order to be a Christian I must walk as He walks or that will be the evidence of it? Well, that's what John says. That's what he says clearly. He says, the one who says He abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

Well, what does that mean? Again, we're not talking about perfect conformity. What we're talking about is telos. End.

Goal. Aim. Finish line.

What we're talking about here, what is the great aim of your life? Who do you want to be like? Who are you seeking to imitate? When I was a little boy, I was oftentimes frightened of my father, but always I respected my father. And he was a big man. He was about my size, my height, but he was much stronger, much squarer.

And we would go out when I was a little boy and we would feed the horses, especially in the winter when all the snow and the ice would come and there was no water for the horses or the cattle. And we would go out and either bust ice or carry water in great big buckets. And I can still to this day remember my father reaching down and grabbing one bucket with one hand and another bucket with another and standing there holding that out and just walking across the snow.

And I always wanted to be like him. He would have me out there when I was six years old. And I would reach and grab a bucket and I would reach and grab another bucket and then I would try to put my foot in his footprint.

And honestly, I looked like a drunken spider. If you would have seen me, you would have laughed. If you would have been less than a good man, you would have mocked and joked.

But there would have been no doubt in anyone's mind that little boy wanted to be like his father. He was stumbling and falling and failing. He could not take the same stride, but there was no doubt he wanted to be like somebody and that somebody was his father.

Now, let me ask you a question. Who do you want to be like? And now, be afraid because we really don't even need you to answer that question. We know it already.

Not because we're prophets. Not because we can look inside your heart. All we have to do is open our eyes.

It's not quite as concealed as you think it is. Now, I'm saying that with regard to you, with regard to me, with regard to all of us. The person whom you really hope to be like, it's very evident.

It's very evident. Talk like the world. Act like the world.

Dress like the world. Do everything the world does. Have the same heroes.

Have the same passions and desires. And all that's telling everyone is you love the world. You love the world.

Or do you want to be like Christ? So many things are taught about manhood that are so wrong. As though some of these historic characters, you know, even John Wayne or Teddy Roosevelt or Explorers or this or that are meant to imitate. No, they're not.

Unless they did it for the glory of God, they are not to be imitated. Because we're not talking about being a man like John Wayne or Hercules. We're talking about being a man like Jesus Christ.

We're talking also about being a woman who shows the same virtue as her Lord and elder brother. We're talking about wanting to be like Jesus. Is that evident in your life? Do you desire to be like Jesus? And do you sometimes sit alone like I do at night, in the dark, thinking, this day I acted more like a fool than I did Jesus.

I acted more like a bumpkin than I did Jesus. I acted more like an arrogant man or a Greek or a Roman than I did Jesus. Enter into conversations and say, I didn't speak as Jesus would have spoke there.

Do you want and desire to be like Jesus? And be very, very careful because that wanting to be like Jesus is always filtered through whatever culture or subculture we live in. It could be a guy running around with

flip-flops on. And what would Jesus do? Bracelets? And saying, man, I'm a wild man like Jesus was a wild man.

No, you're like your culture is what you're like. Or people dressing up as though we were still living in the age of pride and prejudice and say, I'm looking like Jesus looks. No, I'm sorry they didn't wear those clothes when Jesus lived.

We're not talking about these kinds of things. We're talking about what we really are, what we really do, how we really think. You see that? Very important.

Now, let's go to the last test and we'll close. Verse 7, Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. And an old commandment is the word which you have heard.

On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. Now, if you've been in our study on Wednesday night, you know this is one of my favorite verses in the whole Bible. Why? I just find it intriguing.

Because John goes, you know, I am not writing a new commandment to you. And then he turns right around and goes, I'm writing a new commandment to you. And you just want to look at John and go, John, which is it? You're either writing an old commandment or a new commandment.

He says, no, I'm writing both. What does he mean? And if you could just meditate upon this text and catch a glimpse of it, because I cannot explain it well. Not even what's in my own heart about it.

He's saying the commandment to love is an old command. It's been from the beginning. It's always been.

The mark of someone who knows God is love. It's an old commandment. But it's a new commandment.

In what way? When Jesus came, He revealed to us such a high expression of love. It is as though love had never been spoken of before. He took it to such another high level that it's as though it was a brand new command.

And He did. He did. And what does He go on to say here? He says, and I love this, He says, on the other hand, verse 8, I am writing a new commandment to you which is true in Him and in you.

John, it's true in me? How? He says, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. The darkness is passing away. And the true light is shining.

And what does that mean? It has a lot to do with revelation, but it also has a lot to do with sanctification. The old things are passing away. There is a sense in which they've all passed away.

You live in a completely different realm, in a completely different sphere. 2 Corinthians 5. The outworking of that. As you go on with the Lord, He's going to be faithful.

He's going to be faithful. To do what? To make sure that more and more darkness is passing and more light is shining. And how will you know when that happens? Well, one of the chief ways you'll know is how you love people.

At least how you learn or are learning to love people. The one thing that I see in such a new light as I've never seen it before, even though I could have spoke the right thing with my mouth, was that in the New Covenant, love is everything. Why? I still don't know what I'm saying when I say that.

It really is true that if you love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and you love your neighbor as yourself, that you will be fulfilling the law of God. And the greatest expression of biblical maturity is love. Love.

It really is. So, a man can run through jungles being chased by enemies. A man can give away everything he has several times.

A man can wear himself out. But if he has not love, he is nothing. He does nothing.

He accomplishes nothing. What's one of the greatest evidences that you are a believer? That you love. And just so you know how important this is, you know the warning Christ gives us in the judgment of the nations of the sheep and the goats.

That there is a separation. And people misunderstand that passage. They read that passage and say, this passage proves that we need to give food to the hungry and clothe the poor and visit people in prisons and have a prison ministry.

That's not what that verse means at all. That's not what that passage means at all. Now, we need to feed the poor, and we need to have prison ministries, and we need to do all those things, but that's not what that text is talking about at all.

You see how you can quote a text and just take it totally out of context. Jesus is not saying, I was a murderer in prison, and you visited me. That's not what He's saying.

What is He saying? The whole thing is the outworking of love for other Christians. That's what the whole thing is about. You say, what do you mean? Let me give you an illustration.

We're meeting in a forest outside of Rome. We're a criminal religion. We're Christians.

And the meeting breaks up at about 11 o'clock at night, and we all know to take different roads back to the city. You go home. You go to bed.

About 4 o'clock in the morning, someone's pounding on your door. You open the door, and it's one of the believers. He says, you've got to meet back in the wood.

Come. So you get dressed. You take your path back to the wood.

There's a meeting there. All the believers. What happened? One of the elders stands up and says, two of our men on the way back were caught by the soldiers.

They were found with some writings. They were tricked. And now they're in prison.

They've been beaten and thrown in jail. Well, a lot of prisons around the world, you may not know this, if someone from the outside does not bring you medicine and food and clothing, you're going to die. And so they said we've got to do something.

And two young believers jump up immediately full of zeal. Like some of you college guys, just full of zeal. We'll take them to close.

We'll go. We'll get the medicine. We'll take it.

And then an older guy like me stands up and says, wonderful. Sit down for a second. You don't know what you're saying.

You see, when you go and you take that medicine and those clothes and everything else and you take it to that prison, they're going to know you're believers too. And if they do, and they're not in that good of a mood, they're going to beat you, strip you, and throw you into prison. Do you know what you're saying when you say I'll go? And then a group jumps up from somewhere in the church, jumps up a group of people and says, this is just stupid.

This is ridiculous. We're tired of this. I mean, we believe in Jesus too, but we just keep seeing this church getting more and more radical and we're just tired of it and we think you guys are crazy.

We've never been called to do this type of thing. They got caught. It's their problem.

God knows what He's doing. We're out of here. And they leave.

And what have you just seen? The division of the sheep and the goats before Judgment Day. And then two old men stand up and they go, look, we've raised our families. Young men sit down.

We don't want you going. We've raised our families. Our children are grown.

Give us the stuff. And so all the people run back to their homes. They're poor.

They're slaves. They get medicines. They go by.

They do everything they can do. They sacrifice everything. They meet back in the wood.

And the two old men take the food and the clothing and the medicine to go minister to the brothers in prison. That's what Jesus is talking about. He's basically saying this.

One of the greatest, if not the greatest evidences that you believe in Him and that you have claimed Him as Lord is that you love the brethren. You love the brethren. Now I know that there are people in this church, so many dear brothers and sisters in Christ that are converted that would do that.

I do know that. And that's wonderful. And what I'm going to say now though, church, is not in any way to disparage that.

I know you would do that. But church, remember this. We do have brothers and sisters in Christ in prison.

We do have brothers and sisters in Christ in need. And maybe as a body, we should be giving more attention to that, don't you think? I know that there are people here who would give everything they had in order to help a brother or sister in Christ. I know you would do that.

But like me, just like me, we often forget, don't we, how many of our brothers and sisters in Christ are suffering and in need. And we need to be putting that before each other all the time. How can we help? How can we help? What can we do? Someone told me a long time ago, you live in the United States.

You don't have to go without. Then I can choose to for the sake of brothers and sisters in Christ. Let's just think about that.

If you're here today and you don't know the Lord, please talk to me. And if you're a believer here today and you don't have assurance, please come and talk to me or Brother Mark or Kevin or other brothers here. And please, if you just want a kind of small talk, I'm going to ask you today not to come and talk to me.

And here's why. It's not because I don't want to hear things from you. It's because I do want to be open to minister to people who may, as I'm just here eating and lingering around, don't be afraid to come up to me.

Don't be afraid to say hi. But my whole point is I really want that if there's someone here today who doesn't know the Lord, I want to be available to them. So does Mark.

So does Kevin. Others. To be available.

Let's pray. Father, I come before You in the name of Your Son. O Lord, only Your Spirit, dear God, can reveal what needs to be, what must be revealed in the heart of every man.

Help us, Lord. Help us. Work in the heart of men and women and children and get glory for Yourself.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

---

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/25/SID25496.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/paul-washer/biblical-tests-of-true-faith/>

# *Grow in Your Walk with Christ*

---

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

**[www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net)**