

## *How to Confirm You Are a Christian • 2 Peter 1:10-11*

In January 2000 the aging Billy Graham was honored at a special luncheon in Charlotte, North Carolina. In response to the extended praise spoken about him, Mr. Graham told a story and here is what he said:

I'm reminded today of Albert Einstein, the great physicist who this month has been honored by TIME magazine as the Man of the Century. Einstein was once traveling from Princeton on a train when the conductor came down the aisle, punching the tickets of each passenger. When he came to Einstein, Einstein reached into his vest pocket. He couldn't find his ticket, so he reached in his other pocket. It wasn't there, so he looked in his briefcase and couldn't find it. Then he looked in the seat by him. He couldn't find it. The conductor said, "Dr. Einstein, I know who you are. We all know who you are. I'm sure you bought a ticket. Don't worry about it." Einstein nodded appreciatively.

The conductor continued down the aisle punching tickets. As he was ready to move to the next car, he turned around and saw the great physicist down on his hands and knees looking under his seat for his ticket. The conductor rushed back and said, "Dr. Einstein, Dr. Einstein, don't worry. I know who you are. No problem. You don't need a ticket. I'm sure you bought one." Einstein looked at him and said, "Young man, I too know who I am. What I don't know is where I'm going."

Billy Graham continued:

See the suit I'm wearing? It's a brand new suit. My wife, my children, and my grandchildren are telling me I've gotten a little slovenly in my old age. I used to be a bit more fastidious. So I went out and bought a new suit for this luncheon and for one

more occasion. You know what that occasion is? This is the suit in which I'll be buried. But when you hear I'm dead, I don't want you to immediately remember the suit I'm wearing. I want you to remember this. I not only know who I am; I also know where I'm going.

We're studying the New Testament writings of St. Peter, who also knew who he was and where he was going. But he was concerned about others. He was actually concerned about us. He wanted us to know for sure that we are Christians and that our eternal destination is heaven. So, let's take a look at what he wrote in II Peter chapter 1.

Earlier in this chapter St. Peter claimed that we live in a world full of corruption and evil. That causes challenges for us as to how we cope in a world with difficulties. He teaches us that God has given to Christians through Jesus Christ everything

we need to succeed in this life and to be sure of eternal life. The trouble is some people have doubts. We wonder if we really are Christians. We are uncertain about what will happen to us when we die. So Peter writes in II Peter 1:10-11, "Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make

*your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*"

There is nothing quite like a free trip to a good place. I remember the first time I cashed in some frequent flyer miles to book a free flight. It was really cool. I went online; put in my frequent flyer number; chose my destination, travel dates, desired departure and arrival times and pushed "select". What I got was an electronic ticket—booked and confirmed but dependent on the word of someone I could not see. So, I shut off the computer and called the 800 number because I wanted to talk to a real person—someone I felt I could trust—and gave

*Just as a personal decision to take a plane trip doesn't count unless you tell the airline, so a personal faith in Jesus Christ must be declared to God.)*

all the same information over the phone. The agent said that everything was okay; my reservation had been made and I had an e-ticket. That wasn't quite good enough for me. I wanted something a little more tangible so she gave me a confirmation number that was a series of letters and numbers. That was helpful, but not fully satisfying. Then she told me I could get further confirmation by e-mail, fax or in the mail. I told her I would like all three. I wanted to be really sure. To paraphrase Peter, I was "eager to make my call and reservation sure."

Peter wasn't writing about an airline destination but about our eternal destiny. He was talking to those of us who have called up God in prayer and asked for a trip to heaven when we die. God has given us a confirmation number like John 3:16. It's a sure thing but it's still sort of an s-ticket (spiritual ticket) and some of us would like something a little more tangible. We'd like a sure confirmation, so Peter encourages us cautious types saying that we should make our "*calling and election sure.*"

"*Calling and election*" refer to God's invitation to us to become a Christian. The Bible explains that God calls us to believe in Jesus as our Savior from sin and to follow him as Leader of life. But it is more than a call to which we respond with a "yes" or "no" or "not interested". It is the election of God when God chooses to vote us into faith. The Bible calls this "salvation" and God always gets the deciding vote.

To understand the Bible's teaching, let's compare it to American elections. In the 2004 presidential primaries television networks "called" the winner one minute after the polls closed. However, every candidate wanted to make sure that the call and election were certified and confirmed. The certification and confirmation did not change the vote, but they gave confidence.

Suppose we go to bed at night wondering what would happen to us if we died during the night. We think we are Christians. We hope we are Christians. But we are eager to know for sure. What should we do to get that confirmation?

Number one is to check beliefs. Affirm that you believe what the Bible says: God's Son came to earth; he was named Jesus; he lived a righteous life; he took our sins on himself, died on the cross and rose from the dead; he offers free eternal life to

whoever believes.

If the answer is "yes" then go on to number two on the list and that is to tell God. Tell God that you believe. In a personal prayer of faith tell God that you believe in Jesus, you accept his forgiveness, you commit to obey him and you want to be a Christian. (Just as a personal decision to take a plane trip doesn't count unless you tell the airline, so a personal faith in Jesus Christ must be declared to God.)

Third on this list of four is to keep a record. Write down the date and content of your prayer to God. When I do business over the phone, I typically grab a pad and pen and at the top of the page I write the date, the actual time of day, the name of the person I'm talking to and I take brief notes about the conversation so that I have, in my own handwriting, a written record of what has occurred. Do the same with God. Write down the time, the place, the date, the content of telling God that you believe and that you accept Jesus Christ as Savior. You say, "I did this a long time ago." Well, if I were making a plane reservation and had uncertainty and it was a trip I really wanted to go on, I would call back and reconfirm. And, if I am in doubt about my conversion, then I will do it again. And this time I'll keep a record! And tell someone else. In the New Testament, baptism was the normal biblical record of salvation. That's why it's called "believer's baptism". It is a record of a person's belief. It is getting some tangible record of this transaction with God.

Fourth and last on this short list is to ask for a confirmation. Just as you talk to someone on the telephone or in person and want a definite confirmation of the transaction that has taken place, do the same with God. Ask God for confirmation of your salvation. There are two usual confirmations from God. They are the Bible and behavior. The Bible is the promise of God; behavior is the way we live, the difference that God makes in our behavior.

As far as Bible confirmation is concerned, there are many different confirmations we can find in the Bible. They, too, are a combination of letters and numbers. I have picked just one, but you can pick others. This one is from Romans 10:9-10:

. . . *if you confess with your mouth,*

*“Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

The other confirmation that comes from God is our own behavior. We behave differently when we have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Our thinking, our actions, our speaking and our attitudes are all altered. We see it in the way we treat people. We desire to help the poor, seek justice, pray and clean up our language. Don't get this backward. It is not that a good life makes us a Christian; it is that being a Christian makes us live a good life.

E-mail is a major part of many of our lives. It certainly is for me. But there are days I have mixed emotions about it. I like the speed and convenience but I receive so many e-mail messages that I often fall far behind and struggle to read and answer them all. When I send an especially important e-mail (perhaps with an attachment) I check two options. The first box I check is so that I will be notified electronically when the message is received by the addressee. The second box I check is for notification when the recipient of the message has opened and read the message. My mind is at ease when my screen reports the confirmations.

Peter tells us to seek confirmation of our salvation from God: “. . . be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure.” And God does that. He sends his confirmation of our salvation through the Bible and through our Christian behavior.

St. Peter writes on to say that once we have received this confirmation we are to enjoy the benefits that are ours in being Christians. And there are enormous benefits! He continues on in verses 10 and 11: *“For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”*

***It is not that a good life makes us a Christian; it is that being a Christian makes us live a good life.***

Being a follower of Jesus Christ is a full time job that has fabulous benefits! The list is long so Peter mentions just three of his favorites. They are that you will never fall, you will receive a rich welcome and you will inherit an eternal kingdom.

By “*never fall*” he is not saying that a Christian will never sin or make mistakes or face problems in life. On the contrary, both from the teaching of the Bible and from observing other Christians we quickly see that they do sin, they do make mistakes and they do face hardships in life. What it is saying is that there is no sin, no mistake and no hardship that God cannot overcome or that will take us down.

Peter lived during the Roman Empire. The language of the day was primarily Greek and it was the language in which these words were written. The picture is of Roman soldiers marching toward a battle. A unit of one hundred soldiers was called a century; their leader was the centurion. If the century was marching along and one of the soldiers tripped on something the assurance was that the century would not leave that soldier behind. They would do whatever needed to be done to make sure that the trip-up was not permanent and that the soldier was not abandoned. It is the same promise that is here being made to Christians.

Occasionally you will talk to people who think that being a Christian is something of an insurance policy for heaven after we die. What we need to realize is that the benefits begin immediately here and now. And one of those many great benefits is that God will come alongside us and help us not to fall and not to be destroyed by the circumstances of life. God will never leave us behind. God will always get us through every terrain of life.

The second benefit on Peter's list is a rich welcome. Every Christian is promised a lavish welcome into the presence of God in heaven.

When I travel on a long and difficult journey, I think of the destination. Driving from Minneapolis to Orlando takes more than 30 hours. I watch the clock. I count the mile markers. I picture the

Magic Kingdom on the horizon!

In ancient Greece each city sent athletes to the Olympic Games. When the city's athlete returned home he wasn't welcomed through the main gate like everyone else. They smashed a hole in the city's wall just for him and threw a huge party in his honor to welcome him back.

That may sound strange to us but it showed that they were willing to go to any length to provide a rich welcome. And that's what Peter has in mind. He is saying that when we are ushered into heaven, into the presence of God, that God will "smash a hole in the wall of heaven." He will have a party and hoopla that will be lavish—just for you!

The biggest benefit of the package is number three. It is the eternal kingdom. Every Christian is guaranteed a place in the eternal kingdom of God. This is literally as good as it gets!

Our life here lasts for a few years or around a century at most. Eternity lasts forever. This life is like a nanosecond compared to eternity. While we are primarily focused on here and now this will be a minor matter in the longer scope of billions and billions of years. Those who believe in Jesus share in the heaven of God forever and ever.

In early 2002, the Philadelphia Enquirer reported a story on Alan Iverson, superstar guard for the Philadelphia 76ers. Iverson talked about the recent death of his friend Rah, who was murdered. Iverson said, "I want to go to heaven. When I die, I want to see Rah. I know he's in heaven, and before I die, I want to know that's where I'm going. I don't want to guess. I want to know that's where I'm going."

So do I. Eternity is too long to take a chance; too important to be unsure. That's why St. Peter

writes, "*Therefore . . . be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*"

Why not pray right now? Tell God that you believe in Jesus. Tell him you trust Jesus for forgiveness of sin and eternal life. Ask God to confirm your salvation and make you totally sure.

Lord God, you love us so much that you gave your Son for us.

You care more about our lives than we care. You want us in heaven more than we want to go there. Listen to our declaration of faith. Hear our commitment to Jesus. Give us all the confirmation we need to make our calling and election sure. We thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.

*Faith Matters*® is the Broadcast Ministry of  
Leith Anderson and Wooddale Church  
6630 Shady Oak Road  
Eden Prairie MN 55344  
952-944-6300  
[www.faithmatters.fm](http://www.faithmatters.fm)  
©Leith Anderson