

Devotional Thoughts :: He who truly believes in Christ -ryle

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He who truly believes in Christ

(J. C. Ryle, "Do You Believe?")

There is a dead faith as well as a living one. There is a faith of devils as well as a faith of God's elect. There is a faith which is vain and useless, as well as a faith which justifies and saves. How shall a man know whether he has true saving faith? The thing may be found out! The Ethiopian may be known by the color of his skin; and the leopard may be known by his spots. True faith may always be known by certain marks. These marks are laid down unmistakably in Scripture. Reader, let me endeavor to set these marks plainly before you. Look at them carefully—and test your own soul by what I am going to say.

He who truly believes in Christ—has a NEW HEART. It is written, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature—old things are passed away; behold, all things have become new." (2 Cor. 5:17.) A believer has no longer the same nature with which he was born. He is changed, renewed, and transformed after the image of his Lord and Savior. He who minds first, the things of the flesh—has no saving faith. True faith, and spiritual regeneration, are inseparable companions. An unconverted person—is not a genuine believer!

He who truly believes in Christ—is a HOLY person in heart and life. It is written that God "purifies the heart by faith," and that Christians are "sanctified by faith." "Whoever has this hope in him, purifies himself." (Acts 15:9; 26:18; 1 John 3:3.) A believer loves what God loves—and hates what God hates. His heart's desire is to walk in the way of God's commandments, and to abstain from all manner of evil. His wish is to follow after the things which are just, and pure, and honest, and lovely—and to cleanse himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. He falls far short of his aim, in many things. He finds his daily life, a constant fight with indwelling corruption. But he fights on—and resolutely refuses to serve sin. Where there is no holiness, we may be sure there is no saving faith! An unholy man is not a genuine believer!

He who truly believes in Christ—works godly WORKS. It is written, that "faith works by love" (Gal. 5:6). True belief will never make a man idle, or allow him to sit still, contented with his own religion. It will stir him to do acts of love, kindness, and charity, according as he sees opportunity. It will constrain him to walk in the steps of his Master, who "went about doing good." In one way or another, it will make him work. The works that he does may attract no notice from the world. They may seem trifling and insignificant to many people. But they are not forgotten by Him who notices a cup of cold water given for His sake. Where there is no working love—there is no faith. A lazy, selfish professing Christian—has no right to regard himself as a genuine believer!

He who truly believes in Christ—overcomes the WORLD. It is written, that "whoever is born of God, overcomes the world—and this is the victory which overcomes the world—even our faith" (1 John 5:4). A true believer is not ruled by the world's standard of right or wrong, of truth or error. He is independent of the world's opinion. He cares little for the world's praise. He is not moved by the world's censure. He does not seek for the world's pleasures. He is not ambitious of the world's rewards. He looks at things unseen—he sees an invisible Savior, a coming judgment, and a crown of glory which never fades away. The sight of these objects, makes him think comparatively little of this present world. Where the world reigns in the heart—there is no genuine faith. A man who is habitually conformed to the world—is not a genuine believer!

He who truly believes in Christ—has the witness of the Holy Spirit. He has hopes, joys, fears, sorrows, consolations, expectations, of which he knew nothing before he believed. He has internal evidences which the world cannot understand. Where there are no inward pious feelings—there is no faith. A man who knows nothing of an inward, spiritual, experimental religion—is not a genuine believer!

He who truly believes in Christ—has a special regard to the person of CHRIST Himself. It is written, "Unto you who believe—Christ is precious" (1 Peter 2:7). That text deserves especial notice. It does not say "Christianity" is precious, or that the "Gospel" is precious, or "salvation" is precious—but Christ Himself! A true believer's religion, does not consist in mere intellectual assent to a certain set of propositions and doctrines. It is not a mere cold belief of a certain set of truths and

d facts concerning Christ. It consists in union, communion, and fellowship with an actual living Person, even Jesus the Son of God. It is a life of . . .

faith in Jesus,
confidence in Jesus,
leaning on Jesus,
drawing out of the fullness of Jesus,
speaking to Jesus,
working for Jesus,
loving Jesus, and
looking for Jesus to come again.

Such life may sound like enthusiasm to many. But where there is true faith, Christ will always be known and realized, as an actual living personal Friend! He who knows nothing of Christ as his own Priest, Physician, Redeemer, Advocate, Friend, Teacher, and Shepherd—knows nothing yet of genuine believing!

Where these marks of which I have been speaking, are utterly lacking, I dare not tell a man that he is a true believer. He may be called a Christian, and attend a Christian church. But if he knows nothing of these marks—I dare not pronounce him a believer. He is yet dead in trespasses and sins. Except he awakes to newness of life, he will perish everlastingly.

Show me a man who has these marks—and I feel a strong confidence about the state of his soul. He may be poor and needy in this world—but he is rich in the sight of God. He may be despised and sneered at by man—but he is honorable in the sight of the King of kings. He is traveling towards heaven! He has a mansion ready for him in the Father's house. He is cared for by Christ, while on earth. He will be owned by Christ before assembled worlds, in the life which is to come!