

Are You Infected?

John P. Durham

*Examine yourselves 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*

The world has been going through a COVID pandemic since early 2020. A big question asked by those around you, your employer, the hospitals, and many others is: are you infected with the COVID virus? So how will you know? There is really no way to know unless you are tested. Even then there can be false results. That is there is a chance you can test positive yet not have the COVID virus, or you could test negative but actually have the virus.

In the past some have suggested there are infection analogies with your spiritual life as well. C. S. Lewis says in Mere Christianity, “He (God the Father) came to this world and became a man (Jesus) in order to spread to other men the kind of life He has – by what I call ‘good infection.’ Every Christian is to become a little Christ. The whole purpose of becoming a Christian is nothing else.” Lewis is saying being full of the Holy Spirit is like being infected by it, a “good infection”.

What if you are asymptomatic, that is you show no signs of a “good infection”? Use this analogy for the actions in your life, is the Holy Spirit visible by your actions? If not, people might be confused and wonder, are you really infected with the Holy Spirit, is it in you? Perhaps it could be, or perhaps not. Should we test ourselves for the Holy Spirit? Is that possible?

One way is to examine ourselves to the standard for our faith, the Bible. Review Romans 12:9-21, Ephesians 4:22-32, Colossians 3:12-14, and 2 Peter 1:5-7 for a checklist of Christian characteristics, and see if Christ is working in you, to see if you are infected with the Holy Spirit.

I warn you though, a truthful reflection of who you are may leave you feeling uncertain. Because we are all imperfect, there may be no positive proof of a “good infection”.

However is there evidence of you growing in these characteristics by your daily living? Sometimes there will be and sometimes not. But over the long run are you exhibiting a growing indication of Christ working in you? Think of when you see someone every day, you may see no changes, but when a longer period of time passes by you do see changes (1 Tim 4:15). So it should be with a life of following Christ. When you trust in Jesus Christ to strengthen you and bridge the gap made by your imperfections, you will see these changes. Rest assured that others will too, and want this “good infection”.

Assuring an Eternal Relationship

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Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ.”

— 2 Peter 1:10-11

I have been in church and heard a minister make an alarming accusation, “A lot of you think you are Christians, but you are not!”. Perhaps observations had been made of some in the congregation with lifestyles unbecoming of a Christian, unrepentant sins, or little or no fruits of the spirit. Whether the message was warranted or not, it took me into a study and pursuit of assuring that I am indeed a Christian. And for that I am grateful.

Assurances are important. For example, we want to be assured our spouses love us, the cars we drive are safe, our doctors are competent, and so forth. Manufacturers must assure the quality of their products. Operators of nuclear power plants and pilots of aircraft must be assured the safety systems will work when required. You get the idea. But what can be more important than assuring your salvation and that you are indeed in Christ, a true believer, a real Christian.

Peter encourages us to confirm our calling and election (2 Pet 1:10). We do not want to go through our life with an assumption we are in Christ when we are not, such a conceit foiled the character “Ignorance” in Bunyan’s Pilgrims Progress. Conversely, if we are in Christ and think we are not, we will miss out on the joy of a Christ relationship and the assurance that an eternal life that awaits us.

So we are left with the problem of how do we assure we are indeed in Christ? Many writers propose we examine ourselves (2 Cor13:5) using scripture (e.g., Rom 12:9-21 and Col 3:12-14, 1 Jn 5) to provide an assurance by seeing that Christ is working within you. A problem of self-examination though is you will always fall short. This shortcoming may make you feel less assured of your salvation and whether you had ever truly believed in and accepted Christ.

I believe the answer lies in the message of 2 Peter 1:5-8 wherein you are to supplement your faith with the qualities listed such as virtue, knowledge, steadfastness, godliness, and love in an increasing manner to be effective and fruitful in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. If these qualities are increasing in you and there is an ever growing desire to know God and follow his commandments, you can be assured of your calling and that you are indeed in Christ, a true believer, a real Christian.

Make sure your eyes are on Christ alone and not yourself, and that you are forever seeking to grow closer to Him because of your gratitude for receiving His gift of

salvation. God promised that those who seek Him, believe in Him, and follow Him will not be snatched away, in that we can be assured of an eternal relationship (Jn 10:27-29).

Supplement:

In a book by Russell J. Boone, *Assurance and Self-Examination: One Man's Journey From Self to Christ*, he writes: "Leaning upon Christ alone for salvation is what the Bible means when it says to believe. I saw that Jesus was completely dependable. He was the Rock upon which my soul could rest. As the Holy Spirit opened the eyes of my understanding to look to Christ for salvation, I finally had true peace and assurance in my soul. This assurance was not based on the examination of a decision I made, or any righteous acts I did, or some religious feelings I had. It was based on Christ alone. He did enough. It was not about anything I did or could do. As the Holy Spirit turned my eyes to Jesus, I simply trusted in Him alone and knew I was saved."