

Four Hallmarks of a Healthy Christian

Text: 1 Peter 1:3-9 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

Purpose: The purpose of this section is to encourage these Christians, that though they are suffering for their faith in Christ, because they have a healthy walk with the Lord, they will be found faithful.

Proposition: God wants you to experience a vibrant Christian walk, where the qualities mentioned in this passage are developing.

Interrogative: What are these qualities and how can we develop in them?

Section 1: The nature of the Christian faith:

The Christian faith leaves an overwhelmingly compelling witness to its trustworthiness:

- **External witnesses to the Christian faith: Psalm 19:1-3** The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard... **Romans 1:18-21** The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened...
- **Historical witnesses to the Christian faith**
 - **The witness of scripture: Hebrews 4:12** The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. **Psalm 19:7** The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple... **Isaiah 55:11** My word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it... **Romans 10:17** Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God...
 - **Its authenticity:** The scriptures are self-authenticating
 - **Its unity:** Diversity of backgrounds and generations

- **Its resilience:** Survival in the face of tremendous animosity
 - **Its transparency:** Brutal honesty about human nature.
 - **Its purity:** Meticulous care was taken to preserve the very words written in the scriptures
- **The witness of the existence of the nation of Israel: Romans 11:1-5** Hath God cast away his people? God forbid...Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace...
- **The witness of the lives of the apostles: 1 Corinthians 15:3-9** I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God...
- **Internal witnesses to the Christian faith: Romans 2:14-16** For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts...
 - **The internal witness of my own nature:** I know that what the Bible says about me is true.
 - **The internal witness of God's ways in my life:** I know that the way the circumstances in my life unfold, there is evidence for God's personal hand of providence.
 - **The internal witness of my conscience:** I understand in my conscience that there is right and wrong, and when I do what is wrong, it unsettles my conscience.
- **The Christian faith is still a matter of faith**
 - There are rational arguments that press us to embrace the gospel.
 - There are compelling witnesses that press us to embrace the gospel.
 - There is a compelling witness from within our own consciences that press us to embrace the gospel.
 - **BUT** we must choose to embrace it in our hearts. It is still a matter of deciding to trust in a person whom we have never seen with our eyes, and to trust in the explanation of significance of events that took place nearly 2,000 years ago.
 - **The gospel is not rejected because of a lack of compelling evidence, but rather out of a rebellious unwillingness to submit to the implications of a holy, sovereign God, who calls all men to repentance and faith in the gospel!**

Section 2: Four Hallmarks of a healthy Christian life:

Hallmark 1: We love the one we have never seen: 1:8 "Whom having not seen, ye love..."

Several passages in the Bible refer to Christians as people having this quality:

Philippians 2:1-2 "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind..."

Romans 8:28 “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose...”

1 John 2:3-5 “Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him...”

- **Healthy Christians have a Biblical view of self and God’s unimaginable love for them.**
- **As healthy Christians meditate on these truths, Christ-centered affections begin to flow from their understanding of these gospel principles.**

Hallmark 2: We trust the one we have never seen: 1:8 “In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice...”

Hebrews 11:13-19 “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country...By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead...”

Hebrews 11:24-27 “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith...he endured, as seeing him who is invisible...”

- **Healthy Christians understand their limitations and are continually growing in a correct understanding of God’s character and ways.**
- **As healthy Christians grow in their conviction of these truths, when put to the test, they have learned to walk by faith.**

Hallmark 3: We are overwhelmed with joy in the one we have never seen: 1:8 “Ye rejoice with joy unspeakable...”

1 John 1:3-4 “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full...”

- **Healthy Christians see that the best that this world has to offer is at best temporary and at worst personally destructive.**
- **As healthy Christians meditate on these truths and choose to give themselves to cultivating a healthy walk with the Lord, their lives will overflow with joy.**

Hallmark 4: We worship the one we have never seen: 1:8-9 “Ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls...”

1 Timothy 1:15-17 “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief...Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

Romans 11:33-36 “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”

- **Healthy Christians understand their position in God’s creation and are continually growing in a correct knowledge of God.**
- **As healthy Christians meditate on these truths, they are pressed in their hearts to worship God for who He is and what He has done in their lives and in His creation.**

Section 3: Application

- **The strength of the Christian experience...** goes to the one who embraces these compelling witnesses and trusts in the sufficiency of Christ.
- **The joy of the Christian experience...** goes to the one who cultivates his dearest friendship with His Creator and Lord.
- **The purpose of the Christian experience...** Goes to the one who pours his life into eternal pursuits in the will of His master.
- **The heartfelt worship of the Christian experience...** Goes to the one whose mind is captivated by the glorious of Christ and the gospel.

Conclusion: God wants you to experience a vibrant Christian walk, where the qualities mentioned in this passage are developing. May we be focused lovers of Christ, who walk by faith as we rejoice in Him, and live lives overflowing in worship to our great God!