

Originally titled True Grace Distinguished from the Experience of Devils

HOW TO KNOW IF YOU ARE A REAL CHRISTIAN



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How To Know If You Are A Real Christian

by Jonathan Edwards

Dated September 28, 1752

Introduction

"You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-and shudder." James 2:19

How do you know if you belong to God? We see in these words what some people depend on as an evidence of their acceptance with God. Some people think that they are all right before God if they are not as bad as some evil person. Other people point to their family history or church membership to show that God approves of them. There is an evangelism programme in common use that asks people certain questions. One of the questions is, "Suppose you were to die today. Why should God let you into his heaven?" A very common response is, "I believe in God." Apparently the apostle James knew people who said the same thing: I know I am in God's favor, because I know these religious doctrines.

Of course James admits that this knowledge is good. Not only is it good, but it is also necessary. Nobody can be a Christian who doesn't believe in God; and more than that, the One True God. This is particularly true for those who had the great advantage of actually knowing the apostle, someone who could tell them of his first-hand experience with Jesus, the Son of God. Imagine the great sin of a person, who knew James, and then refused to believe in God! Certainly this would make their damnation greater. Of course, all Christians know that this belief in the One God is only the start of good things because "anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him." (Heb. 11:6.)

However, James is clear that although this belief a good thing, it is definitely not proof that a person is saved. What he means is this: "You say you are a Christian and you are in God's favor. You think God will let you into heaven, and the proof of it is, you believe in God. But that is no evidence at all, because the demons also believe, and they are sure to be punished in hell." The demons believe in God, you can be sure of that! They not only believe that He exists, but they believe that God is a holy God, a sin-hating God, a God of truth, who has promised judgments, and who will carry out his vengeance upon them. This is the reason the demons "shudder" or tremble- they know God more clearly than most human beings do, and they are afraid. Nevertheless, nothing in the mind of man, that devils may experience as well, is any sure sign of God's grace in our hearts.

This reasoning may be easily turned around. Suppose demons could have, or find within themselves, something of God's saving grace- proof they would go to heaven. This would prove James wrong. But how absurd! The Bible makes it clear that demons have no hope of salvation, and their believing in God does not take away their future

punishment. Therefore believing in God is not proof of salvation for demons, and it is safe to say, not for people, either.

Demons Have a Knowledge of God.

This is seen even more clearly when we think about what demons are like. They are unholy: anything that they experience, cannot be a holy experience. The devil is perfectly wicked. "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44) "He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning." (1 John 3:8) Therefore the demons are called evil spirits, unclean spirits, powers of darkness, and so on. "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." (Eph 6:12)

So it is plain that anything in the minds of demons cannot be holy, or lead to true holiness by itself. The demons clearly know many things about God and religion, but they do not have a holy knowledge. The things they know in their minds may make impressions in their hearts- indeed we do see that the demons have very strong feelings about God; so strong, in fact, that they "shudder." But they are not holy feelings because they have nothing to do with the work of the Holy Spirit. If this is true of the experience of demons, it is also true of the experience of men.

Notice this, that it does not matter how *genuine, sincere, and powerful* these thoughts and feelings are. Demons, being spiritual creatures, know God in a way that men on earth cannot. Their

knowledge of God's existence is more concrete than any man's knowledge could be. Because they are locked in battle with the forces of good, they have a sincerity of knowledge as well. On one occasion Jesus cast out some demons. "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?" (Mat 8:29) What could possibly be a more clear-cut experience than this? However, while their thoughts and feelings are genuine and powerful, they are not *holy*.

Also we can see that the holy *objects* of their thoughts doesn't make their thoughts and feelings holy. The demons know God exists! Matthew 8:29 shows they know more about Jesus than many people do! They are thoroughly that Jesus will judge them some day, because He is *holy*. But it is clear that genuine, sincere, and powerful thoughts and feelings about holy, spiritual things, is no proof of God's grace in the heart. Demons have these things, and look forward to eternal punishment in hell. If men have no more than what the demons have, they will suffer in the same way.

Knowledge of God alone is no proof of salvation.

We may make several conclusions based on these truths. First, that no matter how much people may know about God and the Bible, it is no sure sign of salvation. The devil before his fall, was one of the bright and morning stars, a flame of fire, one excelling in strength and wisdom. (Isa. 14:12, Ezek. 28:12-19) Apparently, as one of the chief angels, Satan knew much about God. Now that he is fallen, his sin has not destroyed his memories from before. Sin does destroy the spiritual nature, but not the natural abilities, such as memory. That the fallen angels do have many natural abilities may be seen from

many Bible verses, for example Eph 6:12 "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." In the same way, the Bible says that Satan is "more crafty" than other created beings. (Gen 3:1, also 2 Cor. 11:3, Acts 13:10) Therefore we can see that the Devil has always had great mental ability and is able to know much about God, the visible and invisible world, and many other things. Since his job in the beginning was to be a chief angel before God, it is only natural that understanding these things has always been of first importance to him, and that all his activities have to do with these areas of thoughts, feelings, and knowledge.

Because it was his original employment to be one of the angels before the very face of God, and sin does not destroy the memory, it is clear that Satan knows more about God than just about any other created being. After the fall, we can see from his activities as a tempter, etc., (Matt 4:3) that he has been spending his time increasing his knowledge and its practical applications. That his knowledge is great can be seen in how tricky he is when tempting people. The craftiness of his lies shows how clever he is. Surely he could not manage his deceit so well without an actual and true knowledge of the facts.

This knowledge of God and his works is from the very beginning. Satan was there from the Creation, as Job 38:47 shows: "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. . .while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?" So he must know much about the way God created the world, and how He governs all the events in the universe. Furthermore, Satan has seen how God has worked his plan of redemption in the world; and not as an innocent bystander, but as an active enemy of God's grace. He saw God work in the lives of Adam and Eve, in Noah,

Abraham, and David. He must have taken a special interest in the life of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of men, the Word of God incarnate. How closely did he watch Christ? How carefully did he observe his miracles and listen to His words? This is because Satan has set himself against Christ's work, and it is to his torment and anguish that Satan has watched Christ's work unfold successfully.

Satan, then, knows much about God and God's work. He knows heaven first-hand. He knows hell also, with personal knowledge as its first resident, and has experienced its torments for all these thousands of years. He must have a great knowledge of the Bible: at the least, we can see he knew enough to try tempting our Saviour. Furthermore, he has had years of studying of the hearts of men, his battlefield where he fights against our Redeemer. What labours, exertions, and cares the Devil has used over the centuries as he has deceived men. Only a being with his knowledge and experience of God's working, and the human heart, could so imitate true religion and transform himself into an angel of light. (2 Cor 11:14)

Therefore we can see that there is no amount of knowledge of God and religion that could prove a person has been saved from their sin. A man may talk about the Bible, God, and the Trinity. He may be able to preach a sermon about Jesus Christ and everything He has done. Imagine, somebody might be able to speak about the way of salvation and the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of sinners, perhaps even enough to show others how to become Christians. All these things might build up the church and enlighten the world, yet it is not a sure proof of the saving grace of God in a person's heart.

It also may be seen that for people to merely agree with the Bible is no sure sign of salvation. James 2:19 shows that the demons really, truly, believe the truth. Just as they believe there is one God, they

agree with all the truth of the Bible. The devil is not a heretic: all the articles of his faith are firmly established in the truth.

It must be understood, that when the Bible talks about *believing that Jesus is the Son of God*, as a proof of God's grace in the heart, the Bible means not a mere agreement with the truth, but another *kind* of believing. "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." (1 John 5:1) This other *kind* of believing is called "the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness." (Titus 1:1) There is a spiritual holding to the truth, which will be explained later on.

Religious experiences are no proof of salvation.

Some people have strong religious experiences, and think of them as proof of God's working in their hearts. Often these experiences give people a sense of the importance of the spiritual world, and the reality of divine things. However, these, too, are no sure proof of salvation. Demons and damned human beings have many spiritual experiences which have a great effect on their heart attitudes. They live in the spiritual world and see first-hand what it is like. Their sufferings show them the worth of salvation and the worth of a human soul in the most powerful way imaginable. The parable in Luke chapter 16 teaches this clearly, as the suffering man asks that Lazarus might be sent to tell his brothers to avoid this place of torment. No doubt people in hell now have a distinct idea of the vastness of eternity, and of the shortness of life. They are completely convinced that all the things of this life are unimportant when compared to the experiences of the eternal world. People now in hell have a great sense of the preciousness of time, and of the wonderful

opportunities people have, who have the privilege of hearing the Gospel. They are completely aware of the foolishness of their sin, of neglecting opportunities, and ignoring the warnings of God. When sinners find out by personal experience the final result of their sin there is "weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt 13:42) So even the most powerful religious experiences are not a sure sign of God's grace in the heart.

Demons and damned people also have a strong sense of God's majesty and power. God's power is most clearly displayed in his execution of divine vengeance upon his enemies. "What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath-prepared for destruction?" (Rom 9:22) Shuddering, the devils await their final punishment, under the strongest sense of God's majesty. They feel it now, of course, but in the future it will show to the greatest degree, when the Lord Jesus "is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels." (2 Thess 2:7) On that day, they will desire to be run away, to be hidden from the presence of God. "Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him." (Rev 1:7) So everyone will see him in the glory of His Father. But, obviously, not all who see him will be saved.

Objection #1- People are different from demons.

Now it is possible that some people might object to all this, saying that ungodly men in this world are quite different from demons. They are under different circumstances and are different kind of beings. An objector might say, "Those things that are visible and

present to demons are invisible and future to men. Besides, people have the disadvantage of having bodies, which restrain the soul, and keep people from seeing these spiritual things first-hand. Therefore, even if demons do have a great knowledge and personal experience of the things of God, and have no grace, the conclusion does not apply to me." Or, put another way: if people have these things in this life, it may very well be a sure sign of God's grace in their hearts.

In reply, it is agreed that no man in this life has ever had the *degree* of these things as the demons have them. No person has ever shuddered, with the same amount of fear that the demons shudder with. No man, in this life, can ever have the same kind of knowledge that the Devil has. It is clear that demons and damned men understand the vastness of eternity, and the importance of the other world, more than any living person, and so they crave salvation all the more.

But we can see that men in this world can have experiences of the same *kind* as those of demons and damned people. They have the same mental outlook, the same opinions and emotions, and the same kind of impressions on the mind and heart. Notice, that for the apostle James it is a convincing argument. He claims that if people think believing in one God is proof of God's grace, it is not proof, because demons believe the same. James is not referring to the act of believing only, but also to the emotions and actions that go along with their belief. Shuddering is an example of emotions from the heart. This shows that if people have the same kind of mental outlook, and respond from the heart in the same way, it is no sure sign of grace.

The Bible does not state how much people in this world may see God's glory, and not have God's grace in their hearts. We are not told

exactly to what degree God reveals himself to certain people, and how much they will respond in their hearts. It is very tempting to say that if a person has a certain amount of religious experience, or a certain amount of truth, they must be saved. Perhaps it is even possible for some unsaved people to have greater experiences than some of those who have grace in their hearts! So it is wrong to look at experience or knowledge in terms of *amount*. Men who have a genuine work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts have experiences and knowledge of a different *kind*.

Objection #2- People can have religious feelings that demons cannot.

At this point, someone might answer these thoughts by saying, "I agree with you. I see that believing in God, seeing His majesty and holiness, and knowing that Jesus died for sinners is not proof of grace in my heart. I agree that demons can know these things as well. But I have some things they don't have. I have joy, peace, and love. Demons can't have them, so that must show that I am saved."

Yes, it is true that you have something *more* than a demon can have, but it is nothing *better* than a demon could have. A person's experience of love, joy, etc., may not be because they have any cause in them different from a demon, but just different circumstances. The causes, or origins, of their feelings are the same. This is why these experiences are no better than those of demons. To explain further:

All the things that were discussed before about demons and damned people, arise from two main causes, natural understanding and self-love. When they think about themselves, these two things are what

determine their feelings and response. Natural understanding shows them that God is holy, while they are wicked. God is infinite, but they are limited. God is powerful, and they are weak. Self-love gives them a sense of the importance of religion, the eternal world, and a longing after salvation. When these two causes work together, demons and damned men become aware of the awesome majesty of God, whom they know will be their Judge. They know that God's judgment will be perfect and their punishment will be forever. Therefore, these two causes together with their senses will bring about their anguish on that judgment day, when they see the outward glory of Christ and His saints.

The reason many people feel joy, peace, and love today, while demons do not, may be more due to their circumstances, rather than any difference in their hearts. The causes in their hearts are the same. For example, the Holy Spirit is now at work in the world keeping all of mankind from being as wicked as they could be (2 Thess 2:17). This is in contrast to demons, who are just as wicked as they can be all the time. Furthermore, God in his mercy gives gifts to all people, such as the rain for crops (Matt 5:45), heat from the sun, etc. Not only that, but often people receive many things in life to bring them happiness, such as personal relationships, pleasures, music, good health, and so on. Most important of all, many people have heard news of hope: God has sent a Saviour, Jesus Christ, who died to save sinners. In these circumstances, the natural understanding of people can cause them to feel things that demons never can.

Self-love is a powerful force in the hearts of men, strong enough without grace to cause people to love those who love them, "But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them." (Luke 6:32) It is a natural thing

for a person who sees God being merciful, and who knows that *they* are not as bad as they could be, to therefore be sure of God's love for them. If your love for God comes only from your feelings that God loves you, or because you have heard that Christ died for you, or something similar, the source of your love to God is only self-love. This reigns in the hearts of demons as well.

Imagine the situation of the demons. They know they are unrestrained in their wickedness. They know God is their enemy and always will be. Although they are without any hope, still they are active and fighting. Just think, what if they had some of the hope that people have? What if demons, with their knowledge of God, had their wickedness restrained? Imagine if a demon, after all his fears about God's judgment, was suddenly led to imagine that God might be his Friend? That God might forgive him and let him, sin and all, into heaven? Oh the joy, the wonder, the gratitude we would see! Would not this demon be a great lover of God, since, after all everybody loves people who help them? What else could cause feelings so powerful and sincere? Is it any wonder, that so many people are deceived this way? Especially since people have the demons to promote this delusion. They have been promoting it now for many centuries, and alas they are very good at it.

True Spiritual experiences have a different source.

Now we come to the question, if all these various experiences and feelings come from nothing more than demons are capable of, what are the kinds of experiences that are truly spiritual and holy? What do I have to find in my own heart, as a sure sign of God's grace there? What are the differences that show them to be from the Holy Spirit?

This is the answer: those feelings and experiences which are good signs of God's grace in the heart differ from the experience of demons in their *source* and in their *results*.

Their *source* is the sense of the *overwhelming holy beauty* and loveliness of the things of God. When a person grasps in his mind, or better yet, when he feels his own heart held captive by the attractiveness of the Divine, this is an unmistakable sign of God's working.

The demons and damned in hell do not now, and never will experience even the tiniest bit of this. Before their fall, the demons did have this sense of God. But in their fall, they lost it, the only thing they could lose of their knowledge of God. We have seen how the demons have very clear ideas about how powerful God is, his justice, holiness, and so on. They know a lot of facts *about* God. But now they haven't a clue about what God is *like*. They cannot know what God is like any more than a blind man can know about colors! Demons can have a strong sense God's awesome majesty, but they don't see his loveliness. They have observed His work among the human race for these thousands of years, indeed with the closest attention; but they never see a glimmer of His beauty. No matter how much they know about God (and we have seen that they know very much indeed) the knowledge they have will never bring them to this higher, spiritual knowing what God is *like*. On the contrary, the more they know about God, the more they hate Him. The beauty of God consists primarily in this holiness, or moral excellence, and this is what they hate the most. It is because God is holy that the demons hate Him. One could suppose that if God were to be less holy, the demons would hate Him less. No doubt demons would hate any holy Being, no matter what He was like otherwise. But surely they hate

this Being all the more, for being infinitely holy, infinitely wise, and infinitely powerful!

Wicked people, including those alive today, will on the day of judgment see all there is to see of Jesus Christ, except His beauty and loveliness. There is not one thing about Christ that we can think of, that will not be set before them in the strongest light on that brilliant day. The wicked will see Jesus "coming in clouds with great power and glory." (Mark 13:26) They will see his outward glory, which is far, far greater than we can possibly imagine now. You know the wicked will be thoroughly convinced of all who Christ is. They will be convinced about His omniscience, as they see all their sins replayed and evaluated. They will know first-hand Christ's justice, as their sentences are announced. His authority will be made utterly convincing when every knee will bow, and every tongue confess Jesus as Lord. (Phil 2:10,11) The divine majesty will be impressed upon them in quite an effective way, as the wicked are poured into hell itself, and enter into their final state of suffering and death (Rev 20:14,15) When that happens, all their knowledge of God, as true and as powerful as it may be, will be worth nothing, and less than nothing, because they will not see Christ's beauty.

Therefore, it is this seeing the loveliness of Christ that makes the difference between the saving grace of the Holy Spirit, and the experiences of demons. This sight or sense is what makes true Christian experience different from everything else. The faith of God's elect people is based on this. When a person sees the excellence of the gospel, he senses the beauty and loveliness of the divine scheme of salvation. His mind is convinced that it is of God, and he believes it with all his heart. As the apostle Paul says in 2 Cor 4:34, "even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers,

so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." That is to say, as was explained before, unbelievers can see that there is a gospel, and understand the facts about it, but they do not see its light. The light of the gospel is the glory of Christ, his holiness and beauty. Right after this we read, 2 Cor 4:6 "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." Clearly, it is this divine light, shining into our hearts, that enables us to see the beauty of the gospel and have a saving belief in Christ. This supernatural light shows us the superlative beauty and loveliness of Jesus, and convinces us of His sufficiency as our Saviour. Only such a glorious, majestic Saviour can be our Mediator, standing between guilty, hell-deserving sinners such as ourselves, and an infinitely holy God. This supernatural light gives us a sense of Christ that convinces us in a way nothing else ever could.

A true spiritual experience transforms the heart.

When a most wicked sinner is caused to see Christ's divine loveliness, he no longer speculates why God should be interested in him, to save him. Before, he could not understand how the blood of Christ could pay the penalty for sins. But now he can see the preciousness of Christ's blood, and how it is worthy to be accepted as the ransom for the worst of sins. Now the soul can recognize that he is accepted by God, not because of who he is, but because of the value God puts on the blood, obedience, and intercession of Christ. Seeing this value and worth gives the poor guilty soul rest which cannot be found in any sermon or booklet.

When a person comes to see the proper foundation of faith and trust with his own eyes, this is saving faith. "For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life." (John 6:40) "I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me." (John 17:6-8)

It is this sight of the divine beauty of Christ that captivates the wills and draws the hearts of men. A sight of the outward greatness of God in His glory may overwhelm men, and be more than they can endure. This will be seen on the day of judgment, when the wicked will be brought before God. They will be overwhelmed, yes, but the hostility of the heart will remain in full strength and the opposition of the will continue. But on the other hand, a single ray of the moral and spiritual glory of God and of the supreme loveliness of Christ shone into the heart overcomes all hostility. The soul is inclined to love God as if by an omnipotent power, so that now not only the understanding, but the whole being receives and embraces the loving Saviour.

This sense of the beauty of Christ is the beginning of true saving faith in the life of a true convert. This is quite different from any vague feeling that Christ loves him or died for him. These sort of fuzzy feelings can cause a sort of love and joy, because the person feels a gratitude for escaping the punishment of their sin. In actual fact, these feelings are based on self-love, and not on a love for Christ at all. It is a sad thing that so many people are deluded by this false faith. On the other hand, a glimpse of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ causes in the heart a *supreme genuine love for God*.

This is because the divine light shows the excellent loveliness of God's nature. A love based on this is far, far above anything coming from self-love, which demons can have as well as men. The true love of God which comes from this sight of His beauty causes a spiritual and holy joy in the soul; a joy in God, and exulting in Him. There is no rejoicing in ourselves, but rather in God alone.

Genuine spiritual experiences have different results.

The sight of the beauty of divine things will cause true desires after the things of God. These desires are different from the longings of demons, which happen because the demons know their doom awaits them, and they wish it could somehow be otherwise. The desires that come from this sight of Christ's beauty are natural free desires, like a baby desiring milk. Because these desires are so different from their counterfeits, they help to distinguish genuine experiences of God's grace from the false.

False spiritual experiences have a tendency to cause pride, which is the devil's special sin. "He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil." (1 Tim 3:6) Pride is the inevitable result of false spiritual experiences, even though they are often covered with a disguise of great humility. False experience is enamored with self and grows on self. It lives by showing itself in one way or another. A person can have great love for God, and be proud of the greatness of his love. He can be very humble, and very proud indeed of his humility. But the emotions and experiences that come from God's grace are exactly opposite. God's true working in the heart causes humility. They do not cause any kind of showiness or self-exaltation. That sense of the awesome,

holy, glorious beauty of Christ kills pride and humbles the soul. The light of God's loveliness, and that alone, shows the soul its own ugliness. When a person really grasps this, he inevitably begins a process of making God bigger and bigger, and himself smaller and smaller.

Another result of God's grace working in the heart is that the person will hate every evil and respond to God with a holy heart and life. False experiences may cause a certain amount of zeal, and even a great deal of what is commonly called religion. However it is not a zeal for good works. Their religion is not a service of God, but rather a service of self. This is how the apostle James puts it himself in this very context, "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-and shudder. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?" (James 2:19-20) In other words, deeds, or good works, are evidence of a genuine experience of God's grace in the heart. "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1 John 2:34) When the heart has been ravished by the beauty of Christ, how else can it respond?

The sight of Christ's beauty- God's greatest gift!

How excellent is that inner goodness and true religion that comes from this sight of the beauty of Christ! Here you have the most wonderful experiences of saints and angels in heaven. Here you have the best experience of Jesus Christ Himself. Even though we are mere creatures, it is a sort of participation in God's own beauty. "Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises,

so that through them you may participate in the divine nature." (2 Pet 1:4) "God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness." (Heb 12:10) Because of the power of this divine working, there is a mutual indwelling of God and His people. "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:16)

This special relationship has to make the person involved as happy and as blessed as any creature in existence. This is a special gift of God, which he gives only to his special favorites. Gold, silver, diamonds, and earthly kingdoms are given by God to people who the Bible calls dogs and pigs. But this great gift of beholding Christ's beauty, is the special blessing of God to His dearest children. Flesh and blood cannot give this gift: only God can bestow it. This was the special gift which Christ died to obtain for his elect. It is the highest token of his everlasting love, the best fruit of his labours, and the most precious purchase of his blood.

by this gift, more than anything else, the saints shine as lights in the world. This gift, more than anything else, is their comfort. It is impossible that the soul who possesses this gift should ever perish. This is the gift of eternal life. It is eternal life begun: those who have it can never die. It is the dawning of the light of glory. It comes from heaven, it has a heavenly quality, and it will take its bearer to heaven. Those who have this gift may wander in the wilderness or be tossed by waves on the ocean, but they will arrive in heaven at last. There the heavenly spark will be made perfect and increased. In heaven the souls of the saints will be transformed into a bright and pure flame, and they will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Amen.

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