

# The Marks of a Christian

by Horatius Bonar

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*A Christian is characterized by their holiness, prayerfulness, zeal, consistency, and humility.*

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:16, Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 9:27, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 5:22-23, Ephesians 2:10, Philippians 2:15, Colossians 3:1-2, James 5:16, 1 Peter 1:15-16

**Topics:** "Living Faith", "Marks of a Christian"

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## Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes that true Christians are identifiable by specific marks that reflect their inner spiritual state. He asserts that a genuine believer will exhibit holiness, prayerfulness, zeal, consistency, humility, and self-jealousy, which are essential characteristics of a life transformed by faith. Bonar warns against the dangers of living in sin or worldliness, as these behaviors contradict the essence of being a Christian. He encourages believers to take their faith seriously, ensuring their lives reflect the light of Christ and the fruits of righteousness. Ultimately, Bonar calls for a life that visibly demonstrates one's identity as a child of God.

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## Transcript

That there are marks by which a Christian is known to be a Christian, is most certain. That there are characteristics which evidence the real state of the heart, both to ourselves and to others, is not a thing called in question by any. Where there is living religion in the soul, it will infallibly attest its existence and vitality by "marks and evidences." If a man walk in sin, is it not plain that he is not a Christian? If a man follow the world and love its pleasures, is it not plain that he is not a saint? If a man be covetous, or unclean, or a blasphemer, or a talebearer, or a drunkard, can he be a Christian? If he be prayerless, praiseless, lifeless, is it not clear that he is also Christless...

Let no one take the great matter of religion easily or lightly, but let him regard it with all earnestness and solemnity. Let him see it with reference to his own personal welfare for eternity...

1. A believing man will be a holy man. Nor can anything said by the author against the improper use of evidences be understood as in the very slightest degree giving countenance to the opposite of this; as if it were possible that the freeness of the gospel could give liberty to sin, or grace be the encourager of licentiousness.

2. A believing man will be a praying man. To say, "I believe," and make this supposed faith an excuse for unprayerfulness, is to deny the very end and object for which we believe, viz. that we may come into the

presence of God and have unceasing fellowship with Him.

3. A believing man will be a zealous man. Faith makes a man zealous. Faith shews itself by zeal. Not by zeal for a party or a system, or an opinion; but by zeal for Christ,--zeal for his church,--zeal for the carrying on of his work on earth.

4. A believing man will be a consistent man. He will seek to abound in all good works,--to bring forth all the fruits of the Spirit,--to follow in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus Christ. Where there are inconsistencies,--evil tempers,--covetousness,--selfishness,--levity,--flippancy,--carnality,--worldliness,--pride, and such like, there is but too sufficient reason to conclude that the man has not yet believed. He says that he believes; but that is not believing. He speaks much about believing; but that is not believing. He vaunts loudly of his assurance, and scorns every one that will not use his language; but this is not believing. He professes great zeal for the freeness and simplicity of the gospel; but that is not believing. He that has really believed will be too much in earnest, too much engrossed with the object before him, to be always telling others of his faith and his assurance, and his zeal for a free gospel.

5. A believing man will be a humble man. He will think little and speak little about himself. True faith carries us above this pride and self-esteem and vain-glory. If he be a minister, he will shrink from proclaiming himself, and his own feelings, and his own doings; and if God has given him success, he will be the last to speak of it. Or if he be not a minister, he will still refrain from giving prominence to self in any of his proceedings. His great object will be to hide self; and not only to forget it himself, but to make others forget it too. The man that is still proud, boastful, vain-glorious, self-confident, has good reason to suppose that he has never yet believed.

6. A believing man will be always jealous of himself. He will walk continually with a most watchful eye upon himself, upon the state of his heart, the state of his life, his growth in grace, his conformity to the image of the Lord Jesus. Knowing that self-jealousy is quite consistent with simple faith and entire peace with God, he is not afraid to cherish it. He is far more jealous of himself than others,--far more given to sit in judgment on himself than on others; though holding fast the blessed truth of a saint's assurance, he is not afraid to search himself most thoroughly, saying, like Paul, "lest by any means I should run or had run in vain." And though grasping most firmly, as amongst the surest and most fundamental doctrines of the Bible, the truths of God's eternal election and predestination unto life, as also the truth of the saint's perseverance unto the end, he does not hesitate to say with the same Apostle "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Corinthians 9:27).

Thus, then, we are to walk "as becometh saints." Nothing in the gospel can, save by man's perversion, in the very least encourage inconsistency or unholy walking. Christ is not the minister of sin. The grace of God cannot lead to licentiousness or unrighteousness.

Nay, the more fully and simply we realize the glad tidings, the more we shall be constrained to a course in conformity with him who hath called to us. We shall feel as if committed to a holy life. Just in proportion as we reject marks and evidences from the grounds of our peace, in that proportion we shall seek to give evidence that we have believed, by bringing forth the fruits of righteousness.

Our light must shine. It must diffuse itself around, making men to feel that we are children of the most High God. In word, in look, in life, in daily deportment, our character as men redeemed by blood and dwelt in by

the Spirit, must be made apparent. All things that are lovely and of good report must be seen in us; so shall it be known "whose we are and whom we serve."

-Taken from Looking to the Cross; Or, The Right Use of Marks and Evidences by William Cudworth, Preface by Horatius Bonar, 1851.

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