

How can we have faith? John 20:19-end,
also Acts 2:14, 22-32.

John said – “that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and by believing you may have life in his name.” A new life John means.

A person once wrote: ***‘My life has changed radically and for the better. I’m a new person now — a Christian.’***

What does that mean, ‘a Christian?’ A Christian is a *Christ*-ian – a follower of Christ; someone who has a relationship with God through Jesus.

How that relationship happens varies enormously. I know the exact date – September 27th 1993. Before that date, I was not a Christian; I became a Christian on that day, and I have been a Christian since then.

Some would say, ‘Do you know, I can never remember a time that I wasn’t a Christian.’

Others would say, ‘Well, I think there was a time when I wasn’t a Christian, and I think I am a Christian now, but I couldn’t tell you exactly how it happened. It was a bit of a process.’

It doesn’t matter which of those categories you’re in; what matters is that you know that you are a Christian now.

C.S. Lewis used this analogy: he said it’s a bit like if you’re on a train from Paris to Berlin. Some people will be awake at the moment the train crosses the border, and they’ll know the exact moment it happened. Other people won’t. It doesn’t matter; what matters is that you know that you’re in Berlin now.

What matters is that you know that you're at the right destination. And what matters is that you know that you're a Christian now —and you can know that. You are blessed.

Jesus said to Thomas: Blessed are those who have not seen who believe. How can we know we have eternal life?

Our confidence is based on three things.
The Word of the Father,
the Work of Jesus the Son,
and the Witness of the Holy Spirit.

The Word of the Father – the Word of God

Our feelings can blow hot and cold – they are changeable. We need to rely instead upon God's promises revealed in his Word.

John 20 told us: "Jesus did many miraculous signs... which are not recorded. But these are written that you may believe..." The revelations in Scripture are what we stand upon....

We stand upon Scripture and its promises.

Here is just one.

Revelation 3:20 – "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me."

Holman Hunt, the painter, illustrated this verse with this painting.

It's called *The Light of The World*. Jesus is standing at the door of someone's house. And the house represents your life, my life.

And this particular person has never opened their life to Christ, and that's shown by the fact that this door is overgrown with weeds and thorns and thistles that have grown up around it.

And Jesus is saying: **“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door—I will come in and eat with them and they with me.**

When Holman Hunt painted this picture, someone said to him, ‘You’ve made a mistake. There’s no handle on the door.’ And Holman Hunt replied, ‘That’s not a mistake. There is a handle, but the handle is on the inside.

He says, **“If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, then I will come in.”** He doesn’t say, ‘I might come in’—it’s a promise: **“I will come in.”**

When someone believes in Jesus, they invite Jesus to come in. We can be sure he comes in, whatever we felt. It’s not dependent on feelings; it’s a promise: **“If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in.”** That was my own experience. I prayed a prayer with a friend repenting of my sins, believing in him, and inviting Jesus to come into my life. I remember later as I went to bed, I didn’t feel anything... but already the next day, things began to change in my life – he can come in.

The WORK of Jesus.

How am I a Christian? because of an event – the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As Peter said: wicked men put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead.” (Acts 2:23b-24). The disciples could all see the nail marks, they could even put their hands in his side if they wanted.

On the cross, he took our sins upon himself. As Isaiah 53 says:
We – like us – like sheep have gone astray and the Lord has laid
upon him the iniquity of us all.

Paul says in 2 Cor 5: - God made him, who had no sin, to be sin
for us, so that in him we may become the righteousness of God.

So how can we receive this free gift? Repentance and faith.
Repentance – admitting we have done wrong, been living a life
independent of God, doing what we want, repentance is going
one way and turning round. Faith. Trust. As John says 'believe in
Jesus'

Jean-Francois Gravelet, better known as Blondin,
was a famous c19th tightrope walker and acrobat. He decided
that he was going to make crossings of a tightrope 335 metres in
length, suspended 50 metres above the Niagara Falls.

One time a royal party came over from England to watch it, and
it included the Duke of Newcastle. He had already done many
extreme things. And on this particular occasion what Blondin did
was, having walked across and back, he then took a wheelbarrow
and he wheeled that across and back. And there was a huge
crowd there cheering him.

And Blondin went up to the royal party, and he said, 'Look, do
you believe that I could put somebody in the wheelbarrow and
wheel them across?'

And they all said yes. The Duke of Newcastle said yes, and he
turned to the Duke of Newcastle and he said, 'Hop in!'

The crowd fell silent, but the Duke would not accept Blondin's
challenge.

'Is there anyone else here who believes I could do it?' asked Blondin.

Silence from the crowd. Seconds stretched into minutes and still no one answered Blondin's question. No one was willing to volunteer. Eventually, an old woman stepped out of the crowd and climbed into the wheelbarrow. To the delight of the crowd Blondin wheeled her all the way across and all the way back again.

The old woman was Blondin's mother. She was the only person willing to put her life in his hands. Faith. That image, is of another person – his manager Harry Colcord - who put their life in his hands

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

If you asked me how I know I am a Christian, I can point to this Book – the Bible, to the event which took place in History – the cross and resurrection – and I can also point to experience, the witness of the Spirit. There is the historical ministry of Jesus, God's Son on the Cross, and there is the Contemporary Ministry of His Spirit in our hearts.

Jesus said – he would come into our lives if we open the door. It is his Spirit, the Holy Spirit who comes in. We read 'he breathed on them and said 'receive the Holy Spirit' – not only the gift of salvation given to his disciples, but also the gift of the Spirit was to be given to them.

What does he, the Spirit, do? One to mention today: Galatians 5:22-23 talks about what the Spirit builds into us : "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control."

Of course like fruit takes time to develop, it means that when someone becomes a Christian, over time you see change in their character as well as other changes.

He changes our relationships with God, ourselves and others. There can be: A new love for God? A desire to read the Bible, to study and understand it? A sense of being forgiven? A new concern for others. Enjoyment of worshipping God. A desire to meet with other Christians. Forgiveness of, or restored relationships with siblings or friends.

Paul described it: “we are being transformed into his likeness”. There are choices we make – how to live in His world as a member of his kingdom. Yet. The Spirit is also at work within us. Changing us, transforming us, growing that fruit.

CONCLUSION

That's how we know that we're in a relationship with God: we know it because of the promises of God—he will come in. We know it because of the death of Jesus for us, what he did for us. And we know it because of the work of the Spirit within us. It is not arrogant to be sure we have eternal life – that was John's aim when writing his gospel.

If you aren't sure, if you have ever really believed in Jesus here is a prayer I am going to pray – a way to start the Christian life and to receive all the benefits which Christ died to make possible. Jesus is alive, he's here.

You can pray this in your heart, echo it in your heart. Just say

*Lord Jesus Christ, thank you that you love me so much.
Thank you that you stand at the door of my life and you knock.
And today, I want to invite you in. I turn away from all the bad stuff
in my life,
all the things that I know are not right. I'm sorry for them and I ask
your forgiveness.
Thank you that you died for me on the cross so that I could be
totally forgiven,
the slate could be wiped clean and that I can make a new start.
And today I put my trust in you.
I ask you to come in and to fill me with your Holy Spirit,
to help me to lead the kind of life that deep down I long to lead.
Thank you, Lord Jesus. Amen.*

*This sermon has been very shaped, with appreciation, by the
Alpha Course talk, 'How can I have faith?'*