

EVIDENCE THAT WE ARE SAVED

Are you saved? Are you right with God? How do you know? What would your answer be to these questions? Some would confidently reply, “I know I am saved because I just feel good”. Another would say, “I hope I am saved but one can never be sure”. The first group contends assurance of salvation comes from within according to their conscience. This makes man his own god. The second group is ruled by uncertainty and doubt, where we must *“live by faith”*.

We can't follow our conscience when determining whether or not we are saved. The word conscience has to do with the heart, the mind and the soul of man. It means one has gathered a certain amount of information and knowledge, which is used to compare with other things to determine whether they are right or wrong. The information may be based on facts or it may be based on falsehoods. Regardless of whether it is true or false it may be accepted as truth then used as a guide. There are those who accept the conscience as a safe guide. Others talk about having a good conscience and since they have a good conscience, they feel within themselves this makes it right. Yet, one may have been deceived, but thinking that he has received the truth, end up having a good conscience. That is why one cannot allow his conscience to be the final authority for determining whether something is right or wrong

When one declares, “just follow your conscience and you’ll be right with God”, nothing could be more of a fallacy”. The conscience can lead one to offer children to crocodiles and to burn them in fire; it leads others to worship a variety of different gods. Is the conscience a safe guide? Look at Saul of Tarsus. He was a Jew, did not believe Jesus to be the Christ and was convinced that the followers of Jesus were blasphemers. He persecuted them (torture is implied), put them into prison and even helped put them to death. Was he right in doing all of this?

After Saul of Tarsus was converted and became a believer in Christ, he said of his former life as a persecutor of Christians in (Acts 23:1), “*I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day*” In (Acts 26:9-11), “*I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.*” In (1Tim 1:13) Paul wrote “.... *I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.*” In (v15) he wrote, “.... *Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief*”. Was he right? He never violated his conscience, yet he was *chief of sinners*. You see, the conscience can be clean and the life still be wrong in the sight of God.

Many believe that the conscience functions to help us know right from wrong. But that is *not* its purpose. The apostle wrote of the Gentiles who had no written reflection from God, in (Ro. 2:15), “***They show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them***”. The conscience ***accuses***” or ***excuses***. That is its purpose, ***bearing witness therewith***” to what is in the heart of an individual. When we do what we think is wrong, our conscience accuses us; when we do what we think is right, our conscience excuses us. But the conscience does not instruct us. It only ***bears witness*** to whether or not we have followed what is in our heart.

Our conscience does not tell us what is right and what is wrong. That judgment must come from within. In (Ro.10:2-3), Paul wrote of the nation of Israel, “***Brethren my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.***” These were people who believed, had zeal, wanted to do right and yet were wrong. They did not violate their conscience, even when they crucified Jesus. In (Acts 3:17) Peter said to the Jews, “***I know that in ignorance ye did it***”. They still did not violate their conscience when they continued to reject Jesus as the Christ. But they were lost, anyway! They did what was in their heart, they thought they were doing right. But they were wrong. Even though they never violated their conscience, their conscience could not save them. In (Tit 1:15), “***To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled***”.

I am persuaded that we can know that we are saved and are right with God. The apostle John wrote of the assurance we can have in Christ, and why. In 1 John 5:9-13, he wrote, ***“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God”.***

If we would be saved, we must recognize that God is the one who forgives. Whether or not we are forgiven depends on what God says, not what we think or feel. But how can we know? How is it possible to know the mind of God? The apostle Paul answers in (1 Cor. 2:11-13), ***“For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual”***. We can know the mind of God and the will of God, only as the Spirit of God reveals them to us. The apostle Paul very pointedly declares that the Holy Spirit ***revealed*** these things to inspired men, ***“ which the Holy Spirit teaches”***.

The only way we can know what pleases God, is to read what God has revealed through the *Spirit* in the writings of the apostles—the scriptures. The only way we can know we are saved is by the words “*which the Holy Spirit teaches*”. There can be no other assurance. Only God can forgive! Only through the words that the Spirit teaches is God’s will and purpose revealed. Some would disparage the writings of the apostles, but Jesus said to them in (Lk 10:16), “*he that heareth you, heareth me*”. And Paul wrote in (1 Thes. 2:13) “*For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe*”. They did not preach and write their thoughts, their words nor their ideas. They preached and wrote the word of God as revealed by the *Spirit of God*.

Are you a child of God? There is a simple test given in the Scriptures. Paul wrote in Ro. 8:14, “*As many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the children of God*”. But what does it mean to be led by the *Spirit of God*? We are led by the *Spirit of God* we follow the words “*which the Holy Spirit teaches*”. There is no other source to which we can turn to find the plan of God for our lives. It is in the Scriptures that the Holy Spirit bears witness. When we find God’s will for our lives, and submit to His will, we can be assured we are children of God. Why? Listen again: “*The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit, that we are children of God*” (Ro. 8:16).

Some contend that the Holy Spirit has born witness to them; they feel in their hearts they are children of God. Brethren, that's just not taught in the word of God. Notice again: "*The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit*". That does not say that the *Spirit* bears witness **To** our spirit, but bears witness **with** our spirit. The two witnesses are in agreement witnessing to the same thing. Let me illustrate. The Spirit, the word of God, teaches that we must hear the word of God (Rom 10:17). "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*". Upon hearing the word of God we must be obedient to it. (1) We must **BELIEVE** in Jesus as the Christ, John 8:24; "*I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.*" (2) We must **REPENT** of our sins, Lk.13:5; "*I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish,* (3). We must **CONFESS** our faith that Jesus is the Son of God. *Rom. 10:10, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation"*.

(4) We must **BE BAPTIZED**, Acts 22:16, “*And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord*”. (5) Be **FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH**, Rev. 2:14; “*...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*”. These passages together are known in the churches of Christ as the *plan of salvation*.

Since I have been obedient and have met these conditions, my spirit bears witness and is in agreement with the word of God which is His witness. Therefore, the Holy Spirit bears witness **with** my spirit that I am a child of God.

The inspired writer shows that the two witnesses must bear witness to the same thing. The two witnesses (the Holy Spirit and my spirit) agree that I am a child of God! The Spirit bears witness in the written word that certain conditions must be met to become a child of God. My spirit bears witness from within that I have met these conditions by my actions. Thus, “***The Spirit himself beareth witness with my spirit***”; I am a child of God. It isn't enough that my spirit bears witness that I am a child of God. The witness of the Holy Spirit (by the word of God) must bear witness to the same thing. This same principle is at work with every promise of God concerning our salvation.

Can we really know that we are saved, that we are children of God, that we have eternal life? Listen again to the apostle John who says we can in (1 John 5:11-13). *“And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”*

Do you have eternal life? Are you sure; there should be no guessing. The Spirit says this life is “in Christ”. Then the next question is, are you in Christ? The Spirit says, in (Ro. 6:3), “*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death*”? The Spirit reveals no other way to get into Christ but to be baptized into Him. Have you done that? Can your spirit bear witness with the Holy Spirit that you are in Christ; and thus have the eternal life that is **in Christ**?

Are you saved? Are you heaven-bound? We should all be able to answer “Yes” with assurance to these questions. Just to feel saved is not enough; that’s only one witness. Our evidence of forgiveness is not just within ourselves, but in the word of God. Only when we submit to the words given by the Holy Spirit can the two witnesses agree that we are children of God. The conscience is important but it cannot save. Doing what is right is necessary, but we must allow God by the Spirit in His word to reveal what right is. When we do that, we can be sure we are children of God. We then can say what the apostle Paul said in, (2 Ti 1:12). “ *I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I committed unto him against that day*”... Again in (2 Ti 4:8), “*Henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness....*”. Then we can say, I know that I “*have eternal life*”, because I am in Christ, and eternal life is in Him.