

# Captive's Corner



*"Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"*

*2 Corinthians 10:5*

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## Assurance of Your Salvation

**O**f Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name every one who believes in Him has received forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10:43). "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jonah 2:9). "He is Just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey" (Zech 9:9). The prophets speak of Jesus. We would not have salvation unless He had done it, or know about it or be sure of it unless He had revealed it to us in His Word. "These things have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His Name" (1 Jn 20:31). "These things I have written to you who believe in the Name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 Jn 5:13). In His Word, God reveals to us the Person and work of Christ for our salvation. Jesus is God the Son in sinless flesh (Matt 1:23; 2:15; Mk 1:1, 24). His work is His death for our sins, in our place, and His resurrection (1 Cor 15:1-5; Acts 2:22-36). This is good news to the one who knows he is a sinner whom God could justly condemn to Hell, for He is Holy and Just and, therefore, cannot allow sin in His presence or allow it to go unpunished. The wages of sin is death. God gave us His unchangeable Word so that the sinner who believes on Jesus to be saved knows he is forgiven of all sin, pardoned fully from sin's penalty, and brought into an eternal relationship with God with unimaginable blessings (Acts 16:30-31; Eph 1:1-14; 2:1-10; 3:8). God's free gift is eternal life (Rom 6:23).

**T**he Bible is God speaking directly to you. Therefore, you know you are saved when you believe what God has said to you: "*I have written...so that you may know you have eternal life.*" It is simple! Do not make it complicated with "buts" and "ifs." These are just refusals to be content and settled with what God says by simply believing Him and trusting what He has said and done to be true for yourself (2 Tim 1:12). God said it and that settles it! He says it is so simple that a child can know he is forgiven and has eternal life. It is not a matter of great understanding. It is a simple matter of yielding to, believing in, or trusting what God says. He has spoken. Do you yield to, believe, and trust in what He has said regarding your need for and God's provision for salvation? The Word of God is forever settled in heaven. Neither it nor God can change (Heb 6:18; Ps 119:89; Mal 3:6). Therefore, if you have seen your need and believed on Jesus, you are saved forever, no matter what you did in the past or what you will do in the future. This is because all your sins were future when Christ died for all of them. It all depends on Jesus who is God the Son and

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cannot fail. Therefore, you are safe and secure in Him. God would have to cease being God to not allow into heaven the one who trusts in the death and resurrection of Christ for his salvation. God has removed the sins of the one who believes on Jesus because Christ bore their punishment on the cross. He also gives us the righteousness of Christ. Therefore, in God's eyes, we are not only sinless, but we are as perfectly righteous as Jesus is (Col 2:13-14; 2 Cor 5:21). He also puts us in such close association with His Son that God considers us as accepted by

**B**esides His Word, He also gives the believer an inward assurance that he is saved. We also know of this assurance through the Word. He gives us His Spirit to permanently dwell in our body. God says that His presence within us is a guarantee that we will one day be in God's presence in our new, glorified, and resurrected body (Rom 5:5; 1 Cor 15:35-38; Eph 1:13; 4:30; Jn 14:16-20). "If anyone does not have the Spirit of God, he does not belong to God" (Rom 8:9b). "*By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit*" (1 Jn 4:13; 2 Cor 5:5).

**W**ith God's Spirit come certain changes within us. These are noticeable in varying degree, depending upon the believer. With God's Spirit comes a new nature and life, that of Christ. This gives us new desires to please God, to do His will instead of sin (2 Pet 1:4). Our desire is to please God now, not sin. By the Spirit's presence a war begins within us between the flesh's desires and the desires of our new nature and Spirit. This inward struggle is very noticeable to the believer. Some believers get discouraged and begin to

*By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit" (1 Jn 4:13). By the Holy Spirit, we know that the Bible is the only Word of God, Jesus is God come in flesh, we are God's Child, and by Him we know and speak to God as Father (Rom 8:15-16; 1 Jn 4:2-6). By His presence, we have a new desire to please God and a new struggle against sin. The daily battle with sin proves God's presence within. The Spirit also bears His fruit through us and disciplines us when we sin (Gal 5:16-17, 22-23; Heb 12:3-11). These are all evidences of His presence and, thus, our salvation.*

think that their struggle with sin is evidence that they are not saved. However, it is really evidence of the exact opposite. I have told several people that I am glad they are struggling with sin because "It takes two to tango." To struggle against sin means you are against sin, and this is exactly where God is and where every true child of God is. When you put your faith in Christ, you jumped ship; you switched sides. You turned against sin because your eyes were opened to your own sinfulness, the Holy and just character of God and, therefore, God's just condemnation of sin and the sinner. Thus, you turned to Christ, your sinless Savior who bore God's judgment against your sin in your place. Sin and Satan are now your enemies because you are with and in Christ, and they are His enemies. See?! A real change

has occurred: new desires, new enemies, new struggles. This could not be if you were still in Satan's domain with sin as your master. Sin and Satan still tempt you, but God's Spirit instructs you to yield to God instead of sin. As you cooperate with Him, He will bring forth the good fruit from Christ's abiding life within you (Jn 15:1-8). Without the Spirit of God, Christ's nature and life, and your change of mind about sin and God (repentance), there would be no struggle. Further evidence of the Spirit's presence is that He confirms to our spirit that the Bible is the only Word of God (1 Jn 4:5-6). The Holy Spirit wrote it. It is His Word. Therefore, naturally, He affirms it and helps us to understand it (1 Cor 2:13; Jn 14:16-17; 14:26; 15:26-27). Part of this ministry of His is to witness to you that you became God's child when you believed on Christ (Rom 8:16). God's Spirit also enables us to speak to God as our Father (Rom 8:15). He also confesses or witnesses within us and to us that Jesus is God come in the flesh (1 Jn 4:2; John 1:1, 14; 20:26-29; Phil 2:5-8). Finally, He testifies in us and through us that God has sent His Son to be our salvation. We believe; therefore, we

confess Jesus has saved us. He is our Savior. These are inward evidences of the presence of God's Spirit (1 Jn 4:13-15; 2 Cor 4:13).

In addition, the presence of God's Spirit, Christ's nature and life within us, and our change of mind about sin and God naturally result in a changed life outwardly not just inwardly. In chapters 6 and 8 of Romans, Paul is basically saying, "It is abnormal, unrealistic, and virtually impossible for a true believer to continue, unchanged, living in sin when you consider the supernatural change which has taken place within him (sin's control broken and God's Spirit and moral nature now dwelling within). Our new nature cannot sin (1 Jn 3:9). It was created in and for righteousness and truth (Eph 4:24). The fruit of the Spirit from our new nature is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22-23). When we yield to be under the Spirit's control, instead of the flesh, He brings forth this fruit out of our new nature and manifests it through the members of our body. These are the good works we were newly created to do (Eph 2:8-10; Rom 6:13; 12:1-2).

God alone is good, and it is His nature and Spirit in us which enables us and instructs us through His Word to do right. Therefore, with this source of good within, you can see why it is very normal for and expected of the true believer to produce good works and, thus, a changed life. God has enabled the believer to do good works, instead of sin, as a result of His salvation, not for his salvation. Therefore, it is perfectly reasonable for James to say that faith without the resultant good works is dead faith (James 2). In fact, God guarantees to transform us into the moral likeness of Christ by His inward work (grace) (Rom 8:28-29; Phil 1:6; 2:13; 2 Cor 3:17-18). God did not save us merely to keep us from Hell. Christ's purpose in dying for us is to completely restore us to God and glorify us with Himself (1 Pet 3:18; Rom 8:28-30). He died so that we would no longer serve self but God (2 Cor 15:5), be zealous for good deeds, not sin (Tit 2:11-14), and be set apart from worldly behavior (Jn 17:13-23). He appeared in flesh, died, and rose to do away with sin completely not just its penalty. The one Who takes sin lightly because he knows he is forgiven of all sin does not understand God's character of Holiness nor His grace—God's supernatural work for us and within us to do away with sin. Grace reigns now! The believer's life should be evidence of this (Rom 5:21; Tit 2:11-14).

Christ's life should be seen in us in an increasing measure over time. There should be an obvious trend toward godliness. However, since this outward evidence varies from day to day, it is not to be the primary source we look to for our assurance that we are saved. This must come from the Word of God and the perfect Person and work of Christ, which does not change from day to day. However, it is quite a joy and clear evidence of God's work within us when we see our life changing from the inside out to be more like Christ from day to day, month to month. God's faithfulness is confirmed with each little step of faith we take into agreement with His will (Phil 1:6; 2:13). First John gives us several such evidences, such as loving other believers and loving God by obeying Him. I suggest you carefully read through 1 John. With time, you should see these qualities more and more manifest through you because God is at work in you to outwardly manifest the Christ-life you possess (Gal 4:19; 2 Cor 4:11; Phil 2:12-13). With each Christ-like thought, word, or deed you will be actually experiencing the eternal life (Christ's life which you possess by faith), being manifest through your members by God's Spirit as you walk by faith (Gal 4:19; 2 Cor 4:11; Col 2:6-7). So, we have God's perfect Person (Jesus), God's finished work (the cross), God's changeless Word (the Bible), and God's permanent presence within (the Spirit) to assure us of our salvation. His permanent presence within us, with many evidences, is also a guarantee that He will complete our salvation. Lastly, God's fruit is the intended purpose, expected result, and outward evidence of our salvation.

When we sin, we actually experience another evidence that God's Spirit is within us. This is God's chastening or discipline. It further confirms that we are God's child. God's Spirit tries to convict us or convince us that we have sinned. This is so that we will agree with God about our sin and turn from it to be back in agreement with Him. Agreement with God results in happy fellowship with God and all the benefits that come with it, such as the enjoyment of our relationship with Him, answered prayer, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. To maintain this happy fellowship with God we should confess our sin to Him and turn from it each time God's Spirit brings a new sin to our attention. To confess means to agree with God or speak the same thing as God speaks about it. We have God's guarantee that when we confess our sin, He will not withhold His happy fellowship from us. This is what His promise of forgiveness means in 1 John 1:9. Jesus has already paid for these sins. We were pardoned from the penalty of these sins when we first believed in Christ. Therefore, the confession and forgiveness of 1 John 1:9 is not to get, keep, or restore our salvation. It is simply to restore our happy fellowship with God and, thus, the enjoyment of our salvation. God also lovingly uses this process of conviction and confession to assure us of His love for us and our salvation by reminding us that the basis of His Fatherly forgiveness of His erring

child is the perfect and already completed work of His Son's shed blood, not our daily performance of pleasing our Father. With each confession comes a greater appreciation for Christ's shed blood and an assurance that "salvation is of the Lord," because each sin proves to me that I could never earn my salvation. Perfection is required, and we have it given to us freely in Christ. He is the only means by which we can get this necessary righteousness (Acts 4:12; 2 Cor 5:8). We learn to hate what is evil (the flesh within us) and cling to what is good (Christ within us) with each sin. God even uses our failures for our good in completing the good work He has begun in us. He uses everything. "We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose . . . to become conformed to the image of His Son . . ." (Rom 8:28-29). "My dear children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous" (1 Jn 2:1). As Advocate, Jesus is before the Father as the One Who has borne the judgment for sin. Therefore, we will not be judged for it. If we do not turn from our sin and agree with God about it when the Spirit convicts us, God may discipline us in further ways, such as sickness or other adversities to bring our attention to the sin which has broken our fellowship (1 Cor 11:17-32). Only as a loving Father does He do this. Therefore, even His discipline is a proof that we are His child and that He loves us too much to allow us to remain out of fellowship with Him (Heb 12:3-11; 1 Jn 1:5-2:2; Rom 8:28-30).

Make no mistake about this. When we sin as a believer, we experience the loss of the enjoyment of our salvation, not the loss of our salvation. Many new believers confuse the two. The Word assures you of your salvation. Obedience brings an enjoyment of your salvation. When you take your eyes off of Christ and, therefore, you sin, the Word assures you that the sin has already been paid for. Therefore, you know you are safe and secure. The joy of our salvation which results from obeying God is lost when we sin until we repent and, therefore, confess it to God and turn from it to do right. You may have heard a believer say, "I don't feel saved." This may be related to having un-confessed sin and, therefore, losing the joy of salvation. Regardless of the reason though, we are not to focus on feelings for our assurance. When you do not feel saved, the Word assures you that you are saved. If you believe God's Word, you know you are saved. Feelings are fickle. They can change easily because they are related to body chemistry. They are not a trustworthy source for being assured that you are God's child. Some think they are saved because they currently have or have had in the past a certain feeling or experience. This explains why one day they think they are happily saved but the next day they feel they are sadly lost. God does not assure us of salvation on the basis of feeling or experience but

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only by faith in Christ. The only question you need to answer is, "Am I trusting in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ to save me from my sin? He died for you! (Rom 5:6-11). God always directs us to His Word. If you are to experience the peace, security, fruitfulness, and joy of your salvation, you must learn to trust in and take sides with God's Word over any other voice. It is so important to spend significant time daily in God's Word so that you know what God says. Then, when anything or anyone suggests something contrary to God's Word, you will know they are lying. You are in a spiritual battle, and your mind is a major battle-ground. If Satan can hinder your assurance of salvation, he will have succeeded in destroying your usefulness for God and your joy. He attempts to do this by suggesting to your mind that you are not really saved. He does this at particularly opportune times, such as when you sin. Doubtful feelings can actually be a scheme of Satan also. This is all very simple though, and it need not cause you one bit of distress as long as you believe God's Word. Believing God's Word shields you from any potential harm from the demonic darts of doubt. God instructs us to resist Satan's lies by setting the truth (God's Word) against the lie. Stand, therefore, on the truth with the assurance of your salvation from God's Word protecting your mind! By believing the Word of God you are shielded from the Devil's doubt-filled darts. As you resist Satan with the Word of God, you can enjoy your salvation and be fruitful for God. I am speaking of the believer's armor in Eph 6:10-18. See also Heb 12:1-2; Jn 15:9-11; Jas 4:7-8; and Jn 10:10. Notice Jesus' example of resisting Satan in Lk 4:1-13. He simply used the Word of God. God's Word says, "While we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly . . . God demonstrated His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Rom 5:6; 8). Jesus Christ said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, He who believes in Me has everlasting life" (John 6:47). The "has" in this verse is present tense in the Greek. It means, "has eternal life right now as a current possession and continually in the future." Rejoice in your salvation my friend! Rejoice! No matter what today brings!

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