

The Bulletin

Meeks St. Church of Christ

1201 Meeks St. Corinth, Ms. 38834
Phone – (662) 287-2187

Visit Our Website at:
MeeksstreetchurchofChrist.com

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"How Can I Know I Am Saved?"

by Kenneth E. Thomas

Christianity is a system of faith, but it is not a leap of faith. Our faith in God is founded firmly upon the evidence of His existence found in His creation. *"The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork"* (Psalm 19:1). *"Because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse"* (Romans 1:19-20).

Our belief in the resurrection of Christ is founded upon the testimony of eyewitnesses: *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life"* (I John 1:1; see also I Corinthians 15:3-8).

The assurance of these things gives us confidence, which is important. Without confidence we can begin to waver and lose our faith.

The most important thing to man is the salvation of his soul. Jesus asks, *"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Matthew 16:26). We need reliable evidence of our salvation. Without it, we can begin to doubt. And when we begin to doubt is when we become most vulnerable to the devil. The importance of this confidence, this assurance of salvation, is shown in a piece of the armor of God - the Helmet of Salvation (Ephesians 6:17).

In battle, the helmet allows one to have confidence to boldly stand and fight. Assurance of our salvation does away with all doubt and gives us the ability to stand for the truth, defend our faith and resist Satan's attacks. We need this confidence.

The Bible tells us that we can be assured of our salvation. *"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"* (I John 5:13). God wants us to know that we are saved, not think we are or wonder if we are. We can know it! But the real question is, "How?" How can we have this assurance? How can we know that we are saved? What is our evidence of pardon? Is it:

Our Own Feelings?

Some people say that they feel they are saved. They had an emotional experience, a strong feeling came over them, and that's when they knew they were saved. Are personal feelings really proof? Even strong feelings? No.! The only thing that feelings prove is that we feel a certain way. I'm sure there are a lot of prisoners who feel like they should be set free, but they are still behind bars. The Bible warns us about our feelings.

Our hearts can deceive us: *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"* (Jeremiah 17:9). The conscience alone is not a safe guide. The apostle Paul believed he was doing the Lord's will when he was persecuting the church (Acts 23:1, 26:9-11).

Some believe they are saved because they had an experience with the Holy Spirit. They would rather give a testimony than study the Bible. Some churches and people thrive on this kind of emotionalism, but it is not reliable. The fact is that our hearts can deceive us. We can't trust our feelings alone. They may be right, but what if they are wrong?!

The Words Of Others?

Some believe they are saved because a loved one, friend or preacher told them they were. I am glad that people have friends and loved ones that they feel they can trust. But the Bible tells us that our soul's salvation is too important to take anyone's word for. Paul told Christians to *"work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"* (Philippians 2:12) Peter admonished the Jews on Pentecost to *"... save yourselves from this crooked generation,"* (Acts 2:40).

The apostle John warned, *"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world"* (1 John 4:1). We are not to believe someone just because they claim to be speaking the truth. We are to test their message and prove it to be true to the word of God. The Bereans are noted for this very thing: *"... they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily to see if those things were so. Therefore many of them believed,"* (Acts 17:11-12a).

They were not willing to accept Paul's message as truth until they had first examined it in light of what the Scriptures said. Inspiration calls these people "Noble" for manifesting such respect for what God's word teaches, even though it was one of Christ's apostles who was preaching to them! False teachers often resent anyone questioning what they teach and they often claim to be "Spirit led"- but what they teach doesn't agree with what the Holy Spirit has revealed in His word.

In such cases the apostle Paul wrote: *"...Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar:..."* (Rom. 3:4). The Word Of God!

God's word gives adequate evidence of our salvation. The Bible is inspired by God. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Timothy 3:16-17). God cannot lie (Titus 1:2). What His word says is the truth. It is our evidence of pardon. But how?

Paul wrote, *"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs-heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together"* (Romans 8:16-17).

We don't have to trust our feelings, or take another's word for it. The Spirit of God bears witness with our spirit that we are saved. These two testify together. Some people have "their spirit" doing all of the "testifying" and what their spirit testifies to and their claims of salvation do not agree with that which the Holy Spirit has revealed! Unfortunately such will get to the judgment only to be told by the Lord, *"I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity"* (Matthew 7:23).

After saying this, the Lord gave the parable of the "two builders" to impress upon us the need to honor His word and be obedient (see Matthew 7:13-29). Please read it slowly, carefully, and prayerfully!

The Holy Spirit and My Spirit Must Agree!

If our salvation were on trial, the Holy Spirit and our own spirit would testify to the fact that we are saved or lost which ever the case may be. The testimony of the Holy Spirit is the word of God. The testimony of our spirit is what we have believed and done in response to the word of God. For example, the Spirit says, *"He who believes and is baptized shall be saved"* (Mark 16:16). If our spirit can honestly say, "I've done that.

I believe and have been baptized to be saved," (not because you thought you were saved when you accepted Jesus as your Savior, but baptized (immersed) "to be saved,") then you can know you are saved. Again, the Spirit says, *"Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins"* (Acts 2:38). If my spirit can honestly say, "I've done that. I have turned away from my sins and error and have been baptized,"(immersed) into the "one

body" "for the remission of past sins," (Acts 2:38; I Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 2:13-16; 4:1-6), then I can know that I am saved! Compliance with God's word is our evidence of pardon. As long as we know we have believed and done what the Bible tells us to do, then we know we are saved. Saved people in the Bible times were not only "added to Christ's blood bought church" (Acts 2:22-47; Colossians 1:13-14), these "saved people" took the name that unites us. That name was and is, "CHRISTIAN", (Acts 11:26; I Corinthians 1:10-12; I Corinthians 3:1-6; Acts 26:28; I Peter 4:16).

Assurance of our salvation is not meant to make us comfortable or negligent, nor should it make us arrogant or haughty. It is meant to give us confidence. We need to "continue to believe in the name of the Son of God." There are many inconsistent, unpredictable things in the world that can cause us doubt and fear. Assurance of our salvation isn't one of them. Christ's word is too plain to leave room for doubt. While the apostle Paul warned against over confidence and boastfulness where our salvation is concerned, in (I Corinthians 9:27; I Corinthians 10:12), he also taught that we may know where we stand in regards to our salvation (see II Timothy 4:1-8). Are you sure there is a "crown of life" laid up or reserved in heaven for you? You can be!

Did Your Claimed Conversion Follow The Great Commission?

(Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20; Luke 24:45-49)

No inspired teacher ever taught that one may be "saved by faith alone." Nor did any inspired teacher ever teach people to, "Join the church of your choice." However, some of the most popular evangelist of our day teach exactly that. Surely you must know that this simply cannot be right since it contradicts the prayer of Jesus and the teaching of His inspired apostles (John 17:17, 20-21; I Corinthians 1:10-12; Ephesians 2:13-16; 4:1-6). The following cases of conversion under apostolic and early evangelist's teaching are not the only cases of conversion to be found in the Acts of the apostles, but they involve some of the most prominently expressed cases. Will you consider each of them? If so, you will see a pattern develop which breaks down into a consistent plan of salvation which involves

1. Preaching or teaching the gospel.
2. Faith in God and in His Son.
3. Confession of said faith before men.
4. Repentance from past sin and error.
5. Baptism into Christ and into the one body to have one's past sin and error forgiven.

Resulting in becoming a Christian, a citizen of Christ's kingdom, a member of Christ's New Testament church. If we follow these examples, believe what they were taught to believe, do what they were commanded to do, will we not become exactly what they became? I affirm the answer is YES! If not, can you tell me why not?

Some Cases of Conversion to Christ Under Inspired Preachers

1. Jews on Pentecost- (Acts 2:22-47).
2. Some people in Samaria- (Acts 8:12).
3. Simeon a former Sorcerer- (Acts 8:13).
4. A Queen's Treasurer- (Acts 8:26-39).
5. Saul of Tarsus a Pharisee- (Acts 9:1-6; 22:16).
6. Cornelius, a Gentile- (Acts 10:1-4, 47-48; Acts 11:14).
7. Lyddia, a business woman- (Acts 16:14-15).
8. A heathen Jailer at Philippi- (Acts 16:16-34).

(Parts of this lesson are borrowed from one by Heath Rogers. I have added quite a lot of my own Biblical material and references for this presentation. — Kenneth Thomas.)