

The Evidence Of Pardon

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1 Pet. 4:17-18

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The question of how one may know he is a child of God is of vital concern to everyone; it has to do with a person’s happiness, both here and in eternity.

Are feelings the evidence of salvation?

Many rest the evidence of their pardon on the basis of fleshly feelings. If they are happy, they are forgiven; if they are unhappy, then they are not forgiven. But it is certain that feelings cannot be relied upon as evidence of one’s pardon and acceptability of God.

One may be honestly mistaken.

There are many people of every religion who feel right. This was true of Saul of Tarsus before his conversion.

Acts 26:9, *“I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.”*

Saul of Tarsus (later called Paul) watched the slaying of Stephen after their coats were laid at his feet.

Acts 7:58-59, *“And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”*

Saul took Christians to prison.

- Acts 22:3-5, *“I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the*

brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished."

- Gal. 1:13, "*For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it.*"

Although Paul had a clear conscience, and was very religious, he was wrong in his fight against the church.

Sincerity is no evidence of acceptability.

Moral judgment is the result of education. One's conscience approves when one does what he believes to be right; it disapproves when one does what he believes to be wrong.

But the conscience does not determine right and wrong.

Many years ago, a Hindu said to a British administrator in India, "Our consciences tell us to burn our widows on the funeral pyres of their husbands!" The Englishman replied, "Our consciences tell us to hang you if you do!"

The conscience is a safe guide only when God is the guide of the moral judgment.

A man may be honestly mistaken; he may have a misinformed judgment. It is not the function of conscience to tell man what is truth.

Thus, if one's conscience does approve his actions, it does not necessarily mean that God is pleased.

Prov. 14:12, "*There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*"

Sincerity is not enough.

Although it was not an easy thing to do, Paul made a change. Why did he change? Because he learned he was wrong. When a man who is honestly mistaken hears the truth, one of two things will happen: either he will give up his error, or he will cease to be honest. No man can be honestly mistaken after he has heard the truth. So Paul gave up his error and remained honest.

Feelings cannot be trusted.

If one believes he is pardoned, he will feel so, whether it be true or not. The feelings of joy or sorrow will be just as intense when produced by error, as when produced by truth.

Story of Jacob.

Gen. 37:31-34, “*And they took Joseph’s coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; And they sent the coat of many colours, and they brought it to their father; and said, This have we found: know now whether it be thy son’s coat or no. And he knew it, and said, It is my son’s coat; an evil beast hath devoured him; Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. And Jacob rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days.*”

Jacob grieved over his beloved son, Joseph, whom he thought to be dead. Joseph’s brothers brought his coat, stained with animal blood, to Jacob to make him believe he was dead, when they actually sold him into bondage. Jacob’s feelings were real, but they were not proof of his son’s death. The testimony was false. As long as Jacob honestly believed that Joseph was dead, he was filled with sorrow, just as much as if it had been the truth.

Man cannot rely upon his feelings in matters of this life. He cannot do this spiritually either. Believing a falsehood does not make it the truth.

Yet, there are those who think that if people are honest in what they believe and practice in religion, whether it is according to the teaching of the Bible or not, they will be eternally saved. How, then, can we know we are free?

Jesus said in John 8:32, “*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*”

If the religious teaching a person accepts is wrong, although the feelings produced are strong, his faith and practice will be wrong.

If one accepts feelings as an evidence of salvation and correct worship, he can prove heathenism or Buddhism to be true just as easily as Christianity. God has nowhere described feelings as an evidence of pardon.

What does it mean to “Walk by faith”?

2 Cor. 5:7, “*(For we walk by faith, not by sight:)*”

It is not a flying leap into the darkness.

Failing to understand what it means to walk by faith, many are walking by feeling instead of by faith. This is one of the barriers we have in getting others to obey the gospel.

It means to believe the revelation of God’s will as recorded in the Bible, and to humbly submit to the same. That which the Bible does not reveal and authorize cannot be done by faith.

Rom. 10:17, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

Faith in Christ is not produced by a direct operation of the Spirit, or a physical sensation in the body, but through the Word.

We have faith in Christ Jesus because of the scriptures.

John 20:30-31, “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

We have the written revelation by which faith is produced. Men cannot know that Jesus is the Son of God by an increased heart beat or pounding in the left side of their chest. It is by the words written about Him.

One does not go to the medicine chest in the dark just “feeling” as if he is getting the correct tablet if poison tablets are near.

During wartime many women have had the feeling that their husbands were killed. Some were killed, and some were not. Their feelings were not justified because many were killed. Based on the percentages of those killed, and the number of women who had these feelings, naturally you will have some matches. Many of those women who had such feelings found their husbands to be safe.

If one receives a sad message and believes it, he will be sad — whether the message is true or false. One may feel secure when he is in danger; and one may be frightened when no danger is present.

People say, “I know that I am saved because I feel it in my heart.”

One woman, who insisted that she knew she was saved by the way she felt, was asked, “How do you know you were saved?” She replied, “By the way I felt.” “But how did you feel?” She replied, “I felt light — just like I could fly.” “Could you fly?” “No.”

Her feelings deceived her.

Neither the emotions, nor the physical sensations of the body can be the test of the truth of thing believed.

What, then, is the evidence of pardon?

Remember, forgiveness of sins comes from God, and not from within the heart of man. Pardon is an act of God. A person can know that he is pardoned only by a statement from God who has the power to pardon. A person in the penitentiary knows that he is pardoned by a statement from the one who has the power to pardon, not by the way he feels.

The Lord has conditions for pardon.

When God promises to forgive sins, it is his right to determine the basis upon which it is to be done.

The Lord has set forth certain conditions in the Bible, and promised that when people comply with these terms he will forgive their sins. What are these terms?

Faith. Mark 16:15-16, *“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”*

Repentance. Luke 13:3, *“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”*

Confession.

- Rom. 10:10, *“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”*
- Acts 8:37, *“And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”*

Baptism. Acts 2:38, *“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”*

This is how we know God has pardoned our sins.

The Roman Christians were made free from sin when they obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine.

Conclusion.

How, then, can a person know that God has forgiven his sins?

God has given us His Word, the terms of our pardon, and every man must submit to, and comply with, them if he wishes to be saved.

Don't put it off.

