

THE WAY OF PEACE

Hearing and following the Lord's voice

INTRODUCTION

If someone asks you, "How do you know that you are saved?", how will you answer them?

You may say, "Oh, I believe in Jesus" ... but the devil believes and he is going to hell.

Or you may say, "I go to this church or that church" ... but even a dog can walk into a church.

Or you may say, "ALL my family are Christians" ... but salvation is personal and no one can enter the Kingdom of God on another person's passport. To be saved, each of us must have a personal relationship with Jesus.

So, how do we have a personal relationship with Jesus and be sure that we are saved?

Firstly, the Holy Spirit lives in *everyone* who repents of their sins and trusts in Jesus. We are told in Acts 2:38 and Eph. 1:13 that as soon as a person turns away from sin (repents), and puts their trust in Jesus, then they are saved and the Holy Spirit immediately comes to live within them. So, if you have repented and put your trust in Jesus then you will be sure that you are saved because "*the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children*" (Rom. 8:16).

Now let us look at how the Spirit testifies (speaks) to us. In John 10:27, Jesus said, "*My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me*" so if we listen to and follow Jesus' voice then we will know that we are one of His sheep, that is, we are one of God's children. Listening to Jesus' voice is the same as listening to the Spirit because the Holy Spirit is also called the Spirit of Jesus. So, what does it mean to listen to and to follow Jesus?

WHAT DOES LISTENING MEAN?

Regarding the Holy Spirit, John 16:8 says, "*When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment*" so whenever we sin the Spirit makes us feel guilty and we lose our peace.

When we lie, we lose our peace.

When we steal, we lose our peace.

When we hate, we lose our peace.

When we lust, we lose our peace and

When we covet, we lose our peace.

Whenever you lose your peace there is something wrong between you and God and you should turn to Him in prayer and ask why you have no peace - He will soon tell you. This is what is meant by listening. LISTENING is simply noticing that you have no peace and asking God why He has taken your peace away.

WHAT DOES FOLLOWING MEAN?

FOLLOWING is simply repenting of whatever sin God is convicting you of. When you come to God in repentance you must have the right attitude. Repentance is not saying, "Yeah, yeah, I know I am sinning but I am only human" as that is just an excuse to continue in sin. Repentance is humbly submitting to God with a broken heart saying something like, "Lord, I have sinned against you. I know I am a hell-deserving sinner. Please forgive me and *cleanse* me of this sin because I don't want to continue doing it". You must have the right attitude of heart when you repent (see 2 Cor. 7:10). If your heart is not right then you won't be forgiven nor will you be strengthened to resist sin. In Psalm 51:17, David showed the right attitude of heart toward his sin when he said, "*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise*". David was brokenhearted over his wickedness and we should be too, as God hates sin.

So **LISTENING** is becoming aware that you have no peace and asking God why He has taken your peace away. **FOLLOWING** is submitting to the Spirit's conviction by humbly confessing our sins and this results in forgiveness and peace with God *as well as* cleansing so that you have the strength to resist future sin.

It may not seem right to say that whenever we lose our peace there is a problem between us and God but, when you carefully consider it, it is true. Stress over family matters, money, work and health are very common but in Matt. 11:28-29 Jesus tells us, "*Come to me, all you who are weary and*

burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls". This rest is simply the peace of God. Also, many of us need to repent of striving to be first because Phil. 2:3-8 tell us to put aside self interest and become servants, just as the Lord did. There are also many Christians who become angry people when they drive a car and many gossip. We must repent of all these things and any other unloving way we may have.

THE PURPOSE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

It is very important to understand that you cannot overcome sin in your own strength but with God, all things are possible. It is God's promise that, through the Holy Spirit, you can be cleansed of *any* sin. No sin is too big for God to handle. Rom. 8:4 tells us that we have the Spirit, "*in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit*". Note that this verse says that if we live according to the Spirit then we can FULLY meet God's righteous requirements. Remember, in Psalm 51:17, David was repenting of being an adulterer, a deceiver and a murderer yet God forgave him because he was brokenhearted over his sin.

Regarding the Spirit's work, Phil. 2:13 says, "*For it is God who works in you [through the Holy Spirit] to will and to act according to his good purpose*" and that purpose is to change you by giving you the power to resist sin so that you can live a new life. Through the Holy Spirit, you are born again and given the power to leave your old sinful life just as 2 Cor. 5:17 tells us, "*if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*"

The Holy Spirit gives us power to live godly lives. 2 Pet. 1:3-4 say, "*His divine power [the Holy Spirit] has given us everything we need for life and godliness [so that] you may ... ESCAPE THE CORRUPTION in the world [sin] caused by evil desires*". Tit 2:11-12 agree with this in saying, "*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age*".

So, we can see from these verses that God gives us His Holy Spirit so that we can have control over our sinful nature and are no longer slaves to sin but, instead, we have Divine Power to live self-controlled lives, holy and pleasing to God (see Rom. 12:1-2).

SOME EXAMPLES OF PERSONAL CLEANSING

I would like to give examples of how God has changed my life.

There was a Christian lady whom I found hard to like. For quite some time I used to avoid her so that I wouldn't have to talk to her but one day I lost my peace when the Lord heavily convicted me of this ongoing sin so I said something like, "Lord, it's wrong that I dislike my sister. Please help me to love her". After this I went to visit her and as soon as I began speaking to her the Lord changed my heart. To my surprise, we became friends and I was at peace with her and with God. I know that I shouldn't have been surprised because God can do anything but it was very special to have God cleanse me of this sin and change my unloving, hard heart.

In John 13:34, God *commands* us to love one another. Is there someone you need to get right with? We are told to love even our enemies. If you are being unkind to anyone then you need to repent. In Rom 12:18 we are told, "*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, **live at peace with everyone***". We should be able to look everyone directly in the eye and "*love one another deeply, from the heart*" (1 Pet. 1:22b). Loving each other is not just something nice to do, it is God's command and the command comes with a very serious warning. In 1 John 4:20; 3:15 we are told that "*If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. ... Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.*"

The sanctifying work of God in our life can be compared to the work of a motor mechanic. We ask a mechanic to work inside our car, to change things and to tune it up so that it runs well. Well, Jesus is our Maker and if we ask Him to work within us then He will change us so that we can live a life which pleases Him. Jesus will not force us to do this. It is only when we willingly listen to and follow His voice that He cleanses us and changes our hearts.

The Lord has delivered me from drinking, swearing, lying, stealing and other sins that I won't mention but being delivered from shyness was a truly wonderful thing. I was so shy that I could hardly talk at Bible studies and I would not go to prayer meetings as I got a headache thinking about it. I also used to get sick before mixing with people and was ashamed of the gospel but one day I got on my knees and, in tears, I said something like, "Christians are meant to live a victorious life but I am a defeated coward. If you want me to change then you will have to do it". I felt no change but next day I met a friend in the city who was preaching on the footpath. When he finished, he asked me if I wanted a turn and with my Bible in one hand and a tract in another I preached in the street and I was as calm and confident as anyone could be – now THAT is the power of the Holy Spirit. I was set free and as John 8:36 says, "*if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed*".

Perhaps the most important place to get right with God is in our own home. Holiness starts with our family. If we are loving and kind to our friends and neighbours but treat our wife, husband or family badly then we are simply hypocrites. In Eph. 5:25 we are told, "*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her*".

THE WAY OF PEACE

Once again, **LISTENING** is becoming aware of your *lack of peace* and asking God why He has taken your peace away. **FOLLOWING** is confessing to God in heartfelt repentance and this results in forgiveness and peace with God *as well as* strength to resist future sin.

When we sin, our peace with God is taken away.

When we repent, our peace returns.

EVERY TIME we lose our peace, there is a problem between us and God.

Rom. 8:14 tells us that "*those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God*" so sons of God listen to and follow the Holy Spirit's leading and will have peace with God because Romans 8:6b tells us that "*the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace*". Read the passage Col. 3:1-17 which tells us to "*put to death*" all sin and to "*put on love*" and by doing this we let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts.

Love, faithfulness, righteousness and peace are all in perfect unity and are so close that they meet and kiss each other as Psalm 85:10 tells us,

*"Love and faithfulness meet together;
righteousness and peace kiss each other".*

Isa. 26:3 sums up the peace of God where it says, "*You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you*". So, if we listen to and follow Jesus' voice then we will know God's perfect peace.

WHAT HAPPENS IF WE DON'T LISTEN TO AND FOLLOW JESUS?

Firstly, what I have been talking about in this booklet is *not* about being sinlessly perfect as we all sin from time to time. What I am talking about is that we must not have a sinful *lifestyle*. That is, things like lying, stealing, hating, lusting etc must not be part of our normal way of life. We may struggle with sin but the fact that we are struggling shows that we have a repentant heart. God will forgive any sin but if we refuse to repent, and deliberately continue in sin, then we will be in danger of losing our salvation (see Heb. 10:26-30). 1 John 1:9 says, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*" The key word in this verse is 'IF', so to receive forgiveness we must confess/repent whenever we sin. The danger of not doing this is given in the following verses which are only a few of many warnings given to Christians.

Rom. 8:12-14 warn us in saying, "*Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation--but it is not to the sinful nature ... For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die [in hell]; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God*".

1 John 3:6a and 3:10b tell us that “No one who lives in him keeps on sinning ... Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother”.

Col. 1:21-23 say, “Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation – **IF** you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel”. Note the 'IF'.

These verses and many others tell us that if we ignore the Holy Spirit's conviction and deliberately continue in sin then we are in danger of the fire of hell. Let us all listen to James 1:22 which says, “**Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says**”. So, don't just LISTEN to the Spirit convicting you of sin, FOLLOW by repenting.

PEACE IS OUR GUIDE IN ALL THINGS

I have been focusing on sin but God's peace is our guide in all matters. Phil. 4:6-7 say, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in **everything**, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the **peace of God**, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus”. So, when you ask, God will give you wisdom in all that you think, say and do and you will have His peace when your ways are according to His will. He will take away your peace if you speak, think or do anything that is against His will. So, when you pray about something and have peace about doing it then go ahead and do it because God always honours our prayers and gives us His peace when we are doing things according to His will.

God will even control your tongue ... if you allow Him. James 1:19 says, “My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry”. At times I speak too quickly and wish that I had never said some things but, whenever I ask God to help me with what I say, He controls my tongue. I often say to God, “Set a guard over my mouth, O LORD; keep watch over the door of my lips” (Psalm 141:3).

Again, I would like to stress this very important point:

**Whenever we sin (or go against His will)
God takes our peace away.
When we repent, God's peace returns.
EVERY TIME we lose our peace,
there is a problem between us and God.**

Losing our peace can be compared to a referee's whistle. When we hear the referee's whistle we stop to hear what he has to say. In the same way, when we lose our peace we should stop and listen to God.

FINISHING OFF

I will finish off with a few verses which tell us that our salvation is 'in' Jesus. Jesus compares our life in Him with the life of a branch in a vine. In John 15:5-6, He says, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned”. So, we can see that Christians (Branches) must remain in Jesus (the Vine) otherwise they will be cut out and burned in the fire. Remaining in Jesus is simply continuing to listen to and follow His voice by humbly submitting to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Our eternal salvation is like the life of a goldfish. As long as the fish remains in the water it will live but if it jumps out of the bowl it will die. So, just as the goldfish must stay in the water for it to live, you and I must remain in Jesus if we want to remain saved and live with Him eternally. 1 John 5:11c tells us that “God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son”.

This booklet started out asking how you would answer someone if they asked you how you know that you are saved. The answer is something like this, “I know I am saved because the Holy Spirit assures me that I am a child of God. Therefore I listen to and follow Jesus' voice. If I sin, I repent and receive forgiveness. I have been born again and live a new, holy life”.

Finally, *“Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil. May God himself, the **God of peace**, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Thess. 5:21-23).

May God bless you as you walk with Him.

In the Bible, the Holy Spirit is also called:

The Spirit

The Spirit of Jesus

The Spirit of Christ

The Spirit of Jesus Christ

The Spirit of your Father

The Spirit of God

God's Spirit

God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are all one.

Hearing and following Jesus' voice is the same as:

Being led by the Spirit

Listening to the Spirit

Living by the Spirit

Walking in the Spirit

Walking by faith

Walking with Jesus

Abiding in Jesus

Remaining in Jesus

Believing in Jesus is the same as:

Walking with Jesus

Walking with the Lord

Trusting in Jesus

Committing your ways to Jesus

Putting your faith in Jesus

Walking in faith

Living by faith

The Power Of Sin is an article which describes how to be delivered from the enormous power that sin can have over us. Go to <http://www.christianissues.biz/thepowerofsin.html>

FREE BOOKS

The Calvary Road, by Roy Hession, is a wonderful little book that very simply outlines personal revival (sanctification) through being filled with the Holy Spirit. The 'how to' of Christian Surrender is revealed for all who would seek the Lord with all their heart. This is not another self help book but a most humbling revelation of the sin we fail (or refuse) to see and which keeps us from an intimate walk with Jesus. The book is free to download at:

www.christianissues.biz/revival.html

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