

Sailing With Paul

Simple Papers for Young Christians

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~ 1953 ~

LOIZEAUX BROTHERS, INC., BIBLE TRUTH DEPOT

A Non-Profit Organization, Devoted to the LORD's Work and to the spread of His Truth

19 West 21st Street

New York 10, N.Y.

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Chapter 2

Forgiveness of Sins

No unforgiven soul sails with Paul: which is to say that Scripture recognizes no such person as a believer in CHRIST JESUS who has not already received forgiveness of all his sins. **"In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace"** (Ephesians 1:7).

And the beloved apostle John joins with his brother-messenger Paul, and says, when addressing the entire family of GOD: **"I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His names sake"** (I John 2:12). Now faith lays hold of this, and cries, **"I believe God!"**

Some time ago a young man called upon me. I asked him if he were a Christian. "Yes," was the reply. "At some special meetings held lately by Dr. C-, I trusted CHRIST, and am now seeking to serve Him."

"Indeed," I said, "this is very good news. Then you know what it is to have all your sins forgiven!"

"Oh no, sir!" he cried, "I would not dare say that. I have been converted but a few weeks, and do not feel that I have forgiveness yet. But I am hoping to reach it soon."

"And how do you expect to know when you have attained it?"

"Well, sir, I am not quite clear as to that, but the Bible says something about the SPIRIT's

witness to let us know, and I have not got the witness yet, though I am seeking it every day."

"If you have really trusted CHRIST as your SAVIOUR, as the One who died for you, you already have the witness," I answered.

He looked at me in perplexity, and then said, "I do not understand you. I do not want to doubt GOD, but I cannot feel the witness at all."

I pointed out that the word *feel* is only once found in the New Testament, and that is in Acts 17:27, where Paul says of the Gentiles that "**they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us.**" The word *feeling* is also found but once - in Ephesians 4:19, where the ungodly Gentiles are said to be "**past feeling.**" The word does not belong to the Christian, you see, but to the heathen who have no written revelation. *Our* word is "faith" or "believe." We do not know because we *feel*; but we *believe* GOD's word, and thus we know.

The young man became deeply interested, and it was my privilege then to put before him a line of truth I would now endeavor simply to unfold to my reader. Through it he was soon rejoicing in the knowledge of forgiveness, and I would the same result might follow if these lines are read by any doubting one.

We read in Scripture of the witness of the SPIRIT *to* us, and the witness *in* us. Until we receive the witness to us, we cannot have the witness in us. This is of supreme importance, and, I hope, will be carefully noted.

Open your Bible at the 10th of Hebrews. In the first fourteen verses there is a vivid contrast presented between the temporary and oft-repeated sacrifices and the offering of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, which needs never to be repeated, because full atonement for the sins of every believer has been perfectly accomplished. On the basis of this, "**the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins**" (verse 2). CHRIST has now sat down on the right hand of GOD, because His work is finished. Nothing remains to be done. "**By one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified**" (verse 14); that is, He saves forever and completely all who are set apart to GOD through His blood, by personal faith in Him who shed it.

Now see what glorious results flow from this: "**Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us**" (verse 15) - the work of CHRIST being all complete, the HOLY SPIRIT witnesses to what? and where is the witness found?

First, He witnesses to the new birth: "**I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them**" (verse 16). There is thus a new nature, with new desires and yearnings, implanted in every believer. Nor is this all. He further witnesses: "**Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more**" (verse 17). Thus there is the SPIRIT's testimony to full forgiveness.

Secondly: This witness-record, or testimony, is found in the Holy Scriptures, written by the SPIRIT's dictation. The witness of the SPIRIT is the testimony of the HOLY GHOST *in the Word of GOD*.

Have you believed it? If so, you know, because GOD says it, that your sins are forgiven, if you have trusted CHRIST.

But what about the witness *in us*. We have the witness *in us* when we believe the witness *to us*. We have then received the Word into our hearts - and, remember, *the Word is the witness*.

Now read I John 5:1-13.

Weigh every word, but note especially verse 10: "**He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.**" Compare with this verse 11: "**And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.**" This is the unvarying testimony of Scripture. The SPIRIT's witness is not a happy feeling in my heart. *It is the record of the Word of GOD as to the work of CHRIST and its results.*

When I believe this, the witness I received into my very being, and henceforth "**the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God**" (Romans 8:16). In other words, GOD's testimony, ministered to my soul in the SPIRIT's power, and my personal faith in that Word, are in agreement. I know I am GOD's child, and all GOD's children are forgiven. So I know that my sins are forgiven also.

In a later paper I hope to say something on another aspect of forgiveness - that which the child of GOD needs when he fails; but the forgiveness we have had before us is the eternal portion of all who have rested their souls on CHRIST.

~ end of chapter 2 ~
