

The Holy Spirit's Witness on Remaining Acceptable in the Eyes of God

"As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One that called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behaviour; because it is written, 'For you shall be holy, for I am holy.' " (1 Peter 1:14-16).

The Holy Spirit sums up what it takes to remain a child acceptable to the Father in 1 Peter 1:13-19. He tells us to "gird" our minds for action and to "fix" our hope on the grace to come when Jesus returns. He tells us to be "obedient" children, and not to "be conformed" to former lusts. He tells us to be "holy" and to "conduct" ourselves with fear, or reverence, during our stay upon the earth.

We, as children of obedience" realize that we have been "born again" of incorruptible seed, that is, the word of God (1 Peter 1:22-25).

We therefore have determined to live in a way that the Father approves, putting away such things as malice, hypocrisy and envy and to replace them with the good characteristics we find in the word. As a baby longs for milk, we long for the word that by it we may grow up in Christ (1 Peter 2:1-3).

And, we look to the future with confidence, especially to that imperishable inheritance that fades not away. We are thankful that we are protected by the power of God through our faith (1 Peter 1:3-5).

This, then, is the Holy Spirit's witness. It is sure and true. When we read and obey, we become children of obedience. It is then that the Holy Spirit bears witness through His written testimony with our spirits that we are children of God. The witness of the Holy Spirit is solid and sure testimony, unfading and unchanging. When we hear and obey, He assures our hearts of our acceptability unto God. It's not at all mystical. There need be no guesswork involved. The testimony is there.



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Are You Saved? The Spirit Himself Bears Witness

Romans 8:12-17

"So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh to live according to the flesh -- for if you are living according to the flesh you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the flesh, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him that we may indeed be glorified with Him."

Summary of Passage

There are several related ideas expressed in the above Scripture. We read about personal responsibility and bearing of the consequences if we devote our lives to living according to the flesh (vss. 12-13). We also read of blessings which belong to those who live according to the Spirit (vs. 13). We see that an identifying mark of sons of God are that they are being led by the Spirit (vs. 14). We read that there is a witness, or testimony given by the Holy Spirit to our spirit that we are children of God (vs. 16). Finally, we learn that God's children are heirs of glory (vs. 17).

The phrase we wish to elaborate upon is "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God..." (vs. 16). What does this mean? It means that we can know if we are God's children by listening to the Holy Spirit's testimony which He bears with our spirit.

The Holy Spirit's Witness

"For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God." (1 Corinthians 2:10). The things God wishes us to know have been revealed through His Spirit. These things have been written down for us to read and understand. Jesus, on the night of His betrayal, promised His apostles that He would send the Holy Spirit to them. The Spirit would guide them (the apostles) unto all truth (John 16:7-13). The Spirit would also bring to the apostles minds clearly and unerringly the things Jesus had taught them during His personal ministry (John 15:25,26). That would be three years of teaching, but thanks to this promise, we can be confident that the words of the New Testament are accurate.

It is the Holy Spirit of God that reveals the mind of God to us (1 Corinthians 2:10-13). We need to accept His word, which has been written down for us, and learn not to "exceed" or "go beyond" what "has been written". (1 Corinthians 4:6)

Also, we have assurance that we can read and understand the things revealed in the writings of the New Testament (Ephesians 3:1-5). Note especially verse four: *"And by referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ."*

The promise Jesus made to His apostles concerning the giving of the Holy Spirit to them was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost just over fifty days later. Get these points: The above cited passages show that the Spirit's witness is given in words. The message is from God. They have been written. We can understand the message (see also 1 John 4:1,6; 2 John 9; 1 Thessalonians 2:13 and 2 Timothy 3:16,17).

This means the witness of the Holy Spirit is not given in feelings or emotion; not in an overriding of our wills in a forced direct influence or control of our hearts, not in a special sign, or not in an intuition.

The Spirit's Witness On Becoming A Child of God

"...for you have been born again, not of seed which is perishable, but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God." (1 Peter 1:23).

You and I cannot become children of God except in the way the Holy Spirit has given His witness. He has told us exactly what is entailed in becoming sons and daughters of God.

We become children of God by faith. The Spirit has given the following witness concerning this: *"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." (Galatians 3:26,27).*

The concepts of "faith" and the "word" are closely related. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). So, according to the Spirit's witness, the word must be taught and received, thus producing faith (cf. Romans 10:14-17).

How did the Holy Spirit direct the apostles to answer the question, "Men and brethren, what must we do?" Through the mouths of Peter and the rest of the apostles (Acts 2:4,33,36), the Holy Spirit responded: *"Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:38).*

This is what the Holy Spirit has revealed. Do not let anyone tell you different! If you "feel" you are saved. or a child of God, but have never been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, I would seriously suggest that it is time to pay less heed to your feelings and more heed to the witness of the Holy Spirit.